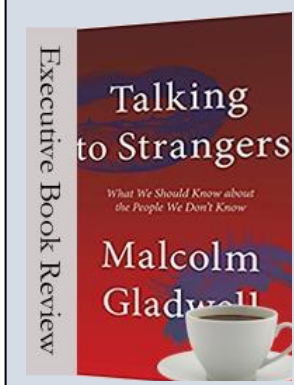




Book # 128
Event # 238

Talking to Strangers by Malcolm Gladwell Reviewed by Robert Schmidt



About the Author

Malcolm Gladwell is the author of five New York Times bestsellers — The Tipping Point, Blink, Outliers, What the Dog Saw, and David and Goliath. He is also the co-founder of Pushkin Industries, an audio content company that produces the podcasts Revisionist History, which reconsiders things both overlooked and misunderstood, and Broken Record, where he, Rick Rubin, and Bruce Headlam interview musicians across a wide range of genres. Gladwell has been included in the TIME 100 Most Influential People list and touted as one of Foreign Policy's Top Global Thinkers.

About the Book

A Best Book of the Year: *The Financial Times, Bloomberg, Chicago Tribune, and Detroit Free Press*

Malcolm Gladwell offers a powerful examination of our interactions with strangers -- and why they often go wrong.

How did Fidel Castro fool the CIA for a generation? Why did Neville Chamberlain think he could trust Adolf Hitler? Why are campus sexual assaults on the rise? Do television sitcoms teach us something about the way we relate to each other that isn't true?

The Book's ONE THING

It is hard to understand strangers and peer into their mind, but what is required of us is:

restraint and humility

BLUE SKY LEADERSHIP CONSULTING | 210-219-9934 | PETER@BLUESKYLEADERSHIP.COM

Need to grow top line revenue? Improve bottom-line profits? Build accountable and trusting teams? Improve cash flow? Develop leadership team members? Blue Sky Leadership Consulting works with small and mid-market organizations to leverage Strategic Thinking and Execution Planning. We encompass many of the principles in these books into our [7 Attributes of Agile Growth](#) methodology and development of your company's [Growth Roadmap](#). Contact us for a free consultation



Part One: Spies and Diplomats – Two puzzles

CHAPTER 1: FIDEL CASTRO'S REVENGE

- **Puzzle #1:** *why can't we tell when the stranger in front of us is lying to our face?*

CHAPTER 2: GETTING TO KNOW THE FUHRER

- **Puzzle #2:** *how is it we can be worse off after meeting a stranger than not meeting them?*
- Strangers are not easy
- They are just as complex and enigmatic as ourselves



Part Two: Default to Trust

CHAPTER 3: THE QUEEN OF CUBA

Why are we so bad at detecting lies?

- One researcher says **Truth Default Theory (TDT)**
- We have a default to truth; our operating assumption is that the people we are dealing with are honest
- A study showed that we believe people because we do not have enough evidence to not believe them

CHAPTER 4: THE HOLY FOOL

The **holy fool**, or **whistleblowers** in modern times, are willing to sacrifice loyalty to their institutions, and in many cases the support of their peers, in the service of exposing fraud and deceit

- When we default to truth, we go with the odds which is actually logical
- Trying to find fraud and deceit also *takes a lot of energy and isn't efficient*
- The statistics say the liar and the con man are rare, but to the holy fool, they are everywhere
- We need holy fools in society from time to time
- They perform a valuable role, that's why we romanticize them





- We never evolved or developed in *ability to filter out liars* because there's no advantage to scrutinizing the behavior of those around you
- The advantage to human beings lies in assuming that strangers are truthful
- *Efficient communication* and *defaulting to trust* has huge benefits that aren't worth the trade-off



CHAPTER 5: CASE STUDY – THE BOY IN THE SHOWER

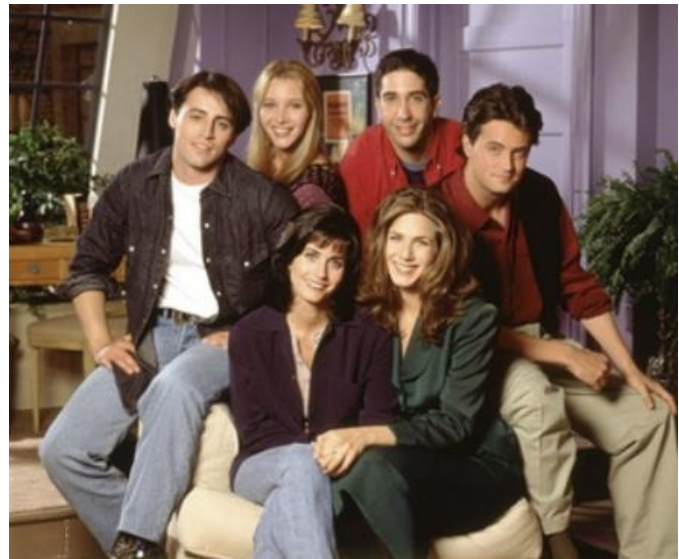
Reader's note: This section was all about how a coach who was highly respected in his community and who had a reputation for hanging out around young boys eventually was discovered to have had inappropriate sexual relationships with minors.

- The problem was that too many people defaulted to the belief that such an accusation of the man couldn't have been true. Therefore, he was not exposed until many years after the fact.

Part Three: Transparency

CHAPTER 6: THE FRIENDS FALLACY

- FACS = Facial Action Coding System
- The actors' performance in FRIENDS are transparent
 - This is the idea that people's behavior and demeanor, the way they represent themselves on the outside, provides an authentic and reliable window into the way they feel on the inside
- When we confront a stranger, we have to substitute an idea, a stereotype, for direct experience
 - That stereotype is wrong all too often
- The *paradox of talking to strangers: we need to talk to them, but we are terrible at it*





CHAPTER 7: A SHORT EXPLANATION OF THE AMANDA KNOX CASE

Reader's note: The Amanda Knox case was about a woman who was accused and convicted of a murder she did not commit. Years later the conviction would be overturned, but the big issue was that people believed her casual behavior was a clear and definitive sign that she was guilty.

- The **assumption of transparency**: we tend to judge people's honesty based on their demeanor

CHAPTER 8: CASE STUDY – THE FRATERNITY PARTY

- New study show that alcohol might not be an agent of inhibition but an agent of *myopia*
 - Alcohol's principal effect is to narrow our emotional and mental fields of vision
 - It creates a state of short sightedness in which *superficially understood immediate aspects of experience have a disproportionate influence on behavior and emotion*. It makes short term considerations more significant and long-term ones fade away
- Drinking puts you at the mercy of your environment
 - It crowds out everything except the most immediate experiences
 - When you're drunk, your understanding of your true self changes
- When alcohol hits your hippocampus, there is no criteria for what it records or what it doesn't. It's pretty random
- The simple **lesson of myopia**: if you want people to be themselves in a social encounter with a stranger, to represent their own desires honestly and clearly, they cannot be blind drunk
- People learn about drunkenness from the culture and society around them

Part Four: Lessons

CHAPTER 9: KSM – WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE STRANGER IS A TERRORIST

THE HARDER WE work at getting strangers to reveal themselves, the more elusive they become

Reader's note: This section was about U.S. military intelligence trying to use information extraction techniques on KSM, a widely known terrorist against America. They eventually realized that all of their sophisticated techniques produced less than reliable information.



Part Five: Coupling – Prairie View Texas

CHAPTER 10: SYLVIA PLATH

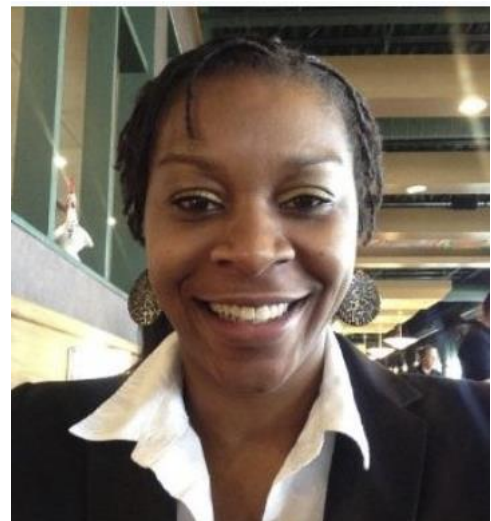
- **Displacement** assumes that people who want to do something as serious as committing suicide, they are very hard to stop
- Blocking one option won't make much of a difference because the assumption is they'll switch to another method
- **Coupling** is the idea that behaviors are linked to very specific circumstances and conditions
- The **law of crime concentration**: crime is tied to very specific places and contexts
- Consider the context of where and when you encounter a stranger because they powerfully influence your interpretation of who the stranger is
- Coupling forces us to view the stranger in their full complexity ambiguity

CHAPTER 11: CASE STUDY – THE KANSAS CITY EXPERIMENTS

Reader's note: This section was about how Kansas City police department experiments on how policing affected crime. The lesson was that increased policing was only more effective when concentrated in the high crime areas, not simply just increasing policing over the entire city.

CHAPTER 12: SANDRA BLAND

- The death of Sandra Bland is what happens when a society does not know how to talk to strangers
- What should we do?
- We can start by *no longer penalizing each other for defaulting to truth*
- To assume the best about one another is the trait that has created modern society
- Those occasions that violate our trusting nature are tragic, but the alternative to abandon trust as a defense against deception is a worse alternative
- We should also accept the limits of our ability to decipher strangers
- It is hard to understand strangers and peer into their mind, but what is required of us is *restraint and humility*





A Retrospective of our last ten books ONE THING

Big Magic	Creativity is a paradox between sacredness, and unimportance, between fear and courage, between art as a crushing chore and as a wonderful privilege. Only when we are at our most playful can divinity finally get serious with us. Make space for all these paradoxes to be equally true inside your soul, and you can make anything. The treasures that are hidden inside you are hoping you will say yes.
A Republic if you can Keep It	For the American republic to have any chance of continuing, we must be able to listen as well as speak, to learn as well as teach, and to tolerate as well as expect tolerance.
Man's Search for Meaning	Forces beyond our control can take away everything we possess except one thing, our freedom to choose how we will respond to the situation.
Emotional Equations	$\text{Wisdom} = \sqrt{\text{Experience}}$
Sapiens	Today, we are less the sum of our past than we are the culmination of the future we imagine (invent), the myths we create and the stories we tell.
Power of Moments	A little attention and energy can transform ordinary moments into extraordinary ones that make life more meaningful.
The Obstacle is the Way	Although we don't control external events, we can control ourselves and our responses to those events. Every obstacle poses an opportunity to improve our condition. We have the power to turn adversity into our advantage and revolutionize our lives!
The War of Art	Do the work
Education of Millionaires	Take responsibility for educating yourself. Become a lifelong learner! Your education is not someone else's job. It's yours!
The Four Agreements	The world is very beautiful and very wonderful. Life can be very easy when love is your way of life. You can be loving all the time. This is your choice. Love in action only produces happiness. Happiness is a choice, and so is suffering...we have a choice: to suffer our destiny or to enjoy our destiny. What is yours?



Let's Pan for Some Gold

What thought, or idea had the biggest impact on you today?

What is your ONE THING? What one specific action you will take TODAY from what was discussed?



Our Faculty, Our Sponsors, Our Cause



Calendar of Events

San Antonio	San Antonio	Corpus	San Antonio	West Side/Houston
"1st Friday"	Wine & Cheese	2nd Tuesday	"4th Friday"	3rd Wednesday
7:30AM	5:30 PM	5:30 PM	8:00 AM	12:00 Noon
Wittigs	Haworth Smartworld	Wittigs Haworth	Alpha Home	American Sunrise Good Samaritan
5-Jun	10-Jun	9-Jun	26-Jun	17-Jun
Pat Whitty The War of Art	John Rugh Education of Millionaires		Robert Schmidt Talking to Strangers	Marisa Ortiz The Four Agreements
10-Jul	15-Jul	14-Jul	24-Jul	15-Jul
Phil Bohlender Crossroads of Should and Must	Marisa Ortiz Moral Imagination Essays		Peter Braeuler Multipliers	John Knotts Influencer
7-Aug	12-Aug	11-Aug	28-Aug	19-Aug
John Knotts Influencer	Nadia Noel-Anglade Occasional Magic Part 2		Phil Bohlender The Human Element	Phil Bohlender From Worst to First