

DANGEROUS INSTINCTS: HOW GUT FEELINGS BETRAY US

GUT INSTINCTS:

Scientists define instincts as inborn behavioral patterns that we exhibit in response to a specific stimulus. Instincts are described as a fear that will guide you away from danger and that your sense of happiness will bring you good fortune. Many books suggest that we acquire knowledge without thinking or reasoning.

WHY INSTINCTS CAN BE DANGEROUS

There is little science to back up the idea of instincts or intuition. Instincts can be dangerous in that they can be counterintuitive to actual protective measures. For example - In cases of school violence, a student's instinct is to hide under their desk rather than to run out of the building. Their survival instincts are telling them two things: "Hide" and "Put something solid between me and the threat." Yet desks do not provide adequate protection from flying bullets and students who hide under desks or tables become stationary targets.

WHY WE CAN BE BLIND TO RISK

The following six factors tend to cloud our observations of other and of situations:

FIRST IMPRESSIONS: We tend to form first impressions of a person within minutes and this impression is often shaped by superficial details: what the person looks like, how they dress, their political or religious affiliations, a facial expression, body language and tone of voice. This is a particularly dangerous blind spot because dangerous people - especially psychopaths - can be masters at impression management.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHERS: Perhaps even before meeting someone, we already have an impression because friends, family, and coworkers have referred to this person as a "good person" or "nice guy." Then, as with first impressions, we filter out the negative and focus on the positive. We assume that they've been prescreened and there's no more work necessary.

SUPERFICIAL DETAILS OF NORMALCY: We trust people who seem normal and distrust people who seem abnormal. If a criminal or dangerous person is intent on you not knowing what is really going on behind his or her front door, he or she is going to make a concerted effort to look normal.

PERSONAL BIASES: Various biases may cause you to unfairly and incorrectly sort entire groups of people into “dangerous” and “safe” categories.

OUR OWN PERSONALITIES: Your personality affects how you view other people. If you are opinionated and rigid, you might sort people into black-and-white categories and have a hard time seeing the gray area.

PAST EXPERIENCES: Negative past experiences with certain types of people can cause you to erroneously sort people into good and bad categories.

FIVE WAYS PEOPLE MISINTERPRET DETAILS

Many times people see behaviors that are odd or even suspicious, and even though they might be skeptical about what is going on, they frequently assign these details into the most logical or ordinary scenario. If these suspicious details are misinterpreted, either purposefully or inadvertently, it is usually for one of the following situations:

NORMALIZING: When you normalize, you find a normal explanation for what at first seemed to be a risky behavior or situation. Whenever you put too much emphasis on superficial indicators of normalcy and too little emphasis on other telling details, you normalize the situation.

RATIONALIZING: When you rationalize a situation, you doubt your ability to properly interpret risk, and you mentally talk yourself out of doing something about the very real risk in front of you. People also tend to rationalize risky behavior because they are too scared to get involved.

EXPLAINING IT AWAY: People often explain away a telling detail by focusing on other details that seem to tell a different story.

IGNORING: Ignoring is a type of magical thinking, pretending that a situation, circumstance, or person is not what it appears to be. People often resort to ignoring when all of the evidence is saying otherwise, but they want – for various reasons – to hold on to their positive view of a person or situation.

ICON INTIMIDATION: We tend to ignore risky behavior if someone is iconic; that is, in a position of great power, status, or fame.

TYPES OF DECISIONS

How effective are your decision-making skills? Below are the three categories of decisions as well as what makes each type of decision dangerous:

RARE DECISIONS: Decisions that you only make a few times in your life are rare decisions.

WHY THEY CAN BE DANGEROUS: Because you don't make these decisions often, you will feel out of your comfort zone. You may lack important skills or the knowledge needed to make such decisions. Many rare decisions generate a lot of emotion, both positive and negative, which can cloud your judgment.

EXAMPLES OF RARE DECISIONS: Whether to get married or divorced, whether to initiate an intervention for a family member or friend, whether to buy or sell a house, whether to change jobs or careers, etc.

OCCASIONAL DECISIONS: Decisions that you make every so often – perhaps once a year or so – are rare decisions.

WHY THEY CAN BE DANGEROUS: While you do have some experience making these kinds of decisions, it's not a skill that you've developed and honed.

EXAMPLES OF OCCASIONAL DECISIONS: What car to buy, where to make a financial investment, whether to allow your child to associate with new friends you know little about, etc.

FREQUENT DECISIONS: You make frequent decisions as often as several times a day.

WHY THEY CAN BE DANGEROUS: There is a desensitization that sets in when you make a decision over and over again. This desensitization can result in everything from reckless or hasty decisions to decisions based on flawed or partially flawed data.

EXAMPLES OF OCCASIONAL DECISIONS: Allowing your children to walk to school alone, whether to get into a car with someone who has just had two drinks, to open your front door when someone knocks without looking through the peephole first, etc.

HOW TO ASSESS RISK

Use the following scale to determine the different levels of risk:

HIGH RISK: The likelihood of your decision resulting in mental, physical, emotional, or financial harm is high.

MEDIUM RISK: These situations have potential to escalate (and become high risk) or subside (and become lower risk). Sometimes you will rate a decision as medium risk because you don't have enough information to deem it high or low, and these unknown factors can easily swing a medium-risk situation into a high-risk category.

LOW RISK: Low-risk decisions result in minimal consequences to your health, livelihood and loved ones.

ARE YOU A GOOD LISTENER?

There are many ways to derail an interview. Here are some examples:

DON'T HIJACK THE CONVERSATION: You hijack a conversation when you interrupt the person talking and bring the topic back to yourself. Don't be a serial interrupter – a serial interrupter will check their calls or texts during a conversation with another person, or change the topic midstream, hoard the conversation, go off on tangents, look away and act as if you are not engaged, etc.

DON'T JUMP IN AND FIX: Many adults are fixers and many adults are also insulted when someone tries to fix their problems. Hold back your desire to fix during the interview.

DON'T TALK MORE THAN 15% OF THE TIME: If you are talking this much, then you are not getting the information you seek because you are not listening.

DON'T NOTE YOUR DISPLEASURE AT WHAT THE OTHER PERSON IS SAYING: Don't sigh loudly. Don't roll your eyes. Don't make sounds like "pfft."

DON'T THREATEN, MANIPULATE, OR BULLY: If you make someone not like you during an interview, chances are they will not tell you what you want and further conversations with them will become more and more difficult.

DON'T TELL THE OTHER PERSON HOW HE OR SHE SHOULD FEEL: Do not tell the other person to not get emotional. Attempting to push emotion back down doesn't work. If anything, it will make the interviewee more emotional.

DON'T BLAME: Avoid blaming the interviewee. Phrases like “You never...” or “You always hurt me” or “It’s your fault” will likely derail your interview.

DON'T DAYDREAM OR MULTITASK: Paying close attention to what your interviewee is or is not saying – and how he or she is saying it – will require every ounce of your attention. If you multitask or daydream you will miss important, telling details and you won’t end up with the information you need.

DON'T GET EMOTIONAL: Getting emotional really limits the outcome of your interview. As soon as you become emotional, you change the direction of your interview and the goals become more about winning than about conducting an interview.

DON'T ACCUSE OR CONFRONT THE OTHER PERSON: The interviewee will not reveal personal information about themselves or something they did if they feel threatened, judged, insulted, or put down by you.

DON'T FILIBUSTER: Don’t repeatedly ask the same question again and again just because you are not getting the response you want. It is certain to shut down meaningful discussion.

DON'T BE A VERBAL ABUSER: Keep in mind that the damage your words inflict may be permanent and irreversible. Don’t use words as weapons to hurt, stun, shock, insult, overwhelm or overpower.

THE GOOD LISTENER TEST

How effective of a listener are you? To find out, think about how you would answer the following questions.

1) Typically, how emotional do I get when I am attempting to interview someone? Rate this on a scale of 1-3, where:

1 = very emotional (angry, sad, frustrated)

2 = non-emotional and detached

3 = I remain interested and tempered

2) Typically, how often do I interrupt?

1 = several times during a conversation

2 = just once or twice during a conversation

3 = almost never

3) Do I say things like “What? You’ve got to be kidding me,” or “That reminds me of a time I...,” or “You think that’s bad, let me tell you about...”

- 1 = frequently
- 2 = sometimes
- 3 = rarely

4) Do I roll my eyes, put my head down, shake my head back and forth, throw myself back in my chair, turn away, get up and walk away, show signs of anger or threatening behavior, or otherwise display that I am not paying attention or do not like what the other person is saying?

- 1 = frequently
- 2 = sometimes
- 3 = rarely

5) Do I fidget until people stop talking and then immediately respond without considering what they’ve said?

- 1 = frequently
- 2 = sometimes
- 3 = rarely

6) Do I let my mind wander to all the other things on my “to do” list and keep thinking that I just don’t have the time for this?

- 1 = frequently
- 2 = sometimes
- 3 = rarely

7) Do I wait until the nanosecond when the speaker goes to take a breath to pounce on him or her with my opinion?

- 1 = frequently
- 2 = sometimes
- 3 = rarely

8) Do I hijack the conversation? For instance by saying something like “Look we’ve been over this a million times. Your ideas are just not going to work. This is what we are going to do”?

- 1 = frequently
- 2 = sometimes
- 3 = rarely

9) I reflect the person's thoughts and feelings back to the person I am listening to.

1 = rarely

2 = sometimes

3 = frequently

10) I ask open-ended questions to encourage the other person to talk.

1 = rarely

2 = sometimes

3 = frequently

(Test Results: The higher your score the better listener you tend to be)

ADDRESSING DECEITFULNESS

Deceitful people require you to use special interviewing skills. You must be able to spot the dishonesty and understand why they are being deceitful.

LYING OR DISTORTING THE TRUTH: Interviewee might give you some truthful information but also a few pieces of false information designed to throw you off track. Or maybe your interviewee is a compulsive liar and everything he or she says is a lie, even the inconsequential details.

WITHHOLDING THE TRUTH: Interviewee might give you some information but then refuse to talk about certain topics.

EVADING: Interviewee might continually change the topic or otherwise try to take the conversation in another direction.

To tell if someone is being deceitful, think about whether any of the following factors are present:

**THERE'S NO DENIAL
THERE'S TOO MUCH DENIAL
THE STORY DOESN'T ADD UP**

WHAT TRAITS CAN CAUSE A PERSON TO BECOME DANGEROUS?

IMPULSIVITY: Behaving with little if any regard for long-term or short-term consequences to self and others.

INAPPROPRIATE OR OUT-OF-CONTROL ANGER: Repeated eruptions of anger in a variety of situations where anger is not appropriate or warranted.

NARCISSISM: Acting self-centered, arrogant, grandiose, with little or not insight or concern for others. They believe they are special, unique, and superior to others.

LACK OF EMPATHY: Inability or unwillingness to understand feelings, concerns, and opinions of others.

INJUSTICE COLLECTING: They collect injustices – real or imagined – over their lifetimes.

OBJECTIFICATION OF OTHERS: Dehumanizing other and not seeing them as humans.

BLAMING OTHERS FOR FAILURES OR PROBLEMS: Seeing oneself as a victim and refusing to accept responsibility for one's life problems.

PARANOIA: Suspicious of the motives and intentions of others.

RULE BREAKING: The life philosophy that rules of society do not apply to you.

USE OF VIOLENCE: A history of committing dangerous or violent behavior, including assault, abuse, intimidation, road rage and more.

THOUGHTS OR FANTASIES OF VIOLENCE: Suicidal, homicidal, and nihilistic thinking.

DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOL PROBLEMS: The use and/or abuse of drugs and/or alcohol that exacerbates other concerning/threatening/dangerous behaviors.

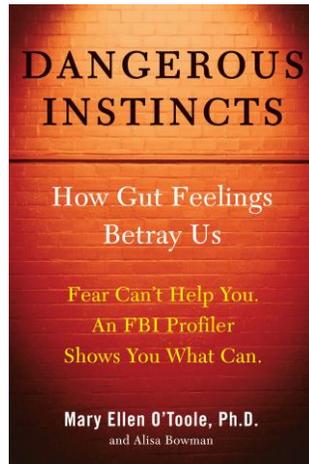
POOR COPING SKILLS: Inability to deal with stressors, disappointments, problems, and/or everyday life problems.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY HATRED: Dislike for and/or hatred of other people or groups because of real or imagined wrongs or other beliefs and opinions.

THRILL SEEKING: A pathological or extreme need for thrill, excitement, and/or attention from others, despite the harm or worry it causes.



ALL OF THE INFORMATION INCLUDED IN THIS HANDOUT IS FROM:



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