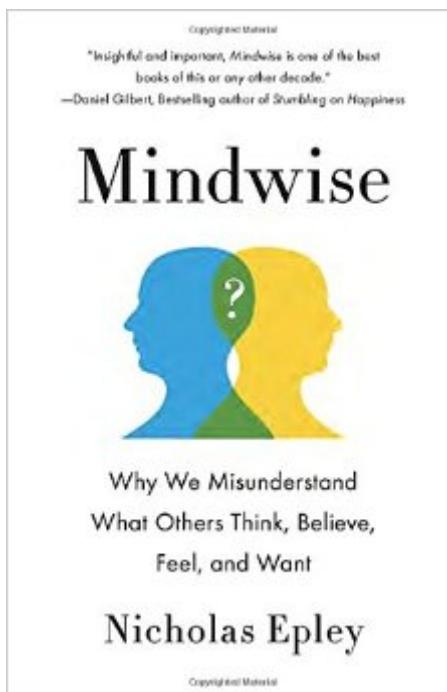


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# Mindwise: Why We Misunderstand What Others Think, Believe, Feel, And Want



## Synopsis

Winner of the 2015 Book Prize for the Promotion of Social and Personality Science (Society for Personality and Social Psychology) Why are we sometimes blind to the minds of others, treating them like objects or animals instead? Why do we talk to our cars, or the stars, as if there is a mind that can hear us? Why do we so routinely believe that others think, feel, and want what we do when, in fact, they do not? And why do we think we understand our spouses, family, and friends so much better than we actually do? In this illuminating book, leading social psychologist Nicholas Epley introduces us to what scientists have learned about our ability to understand the most complicated puzzle on the planet: "other people" and the surprising mistakes we so routinely make. *Mindwise* will not turn others into open books, but it will give you the wisdom to revolutionize how you think about them and yourself.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Why do we so often fail - in spite of our best efforts - to grasp the minds of those we meet? Do we truly know what our spouse thinks about common situations? Can we even vaguely imagine what it feels like to walk in another person's shoes? According to Nicholas Epley, the answer is often a resounding "No". But he counters this discouraging conclusion with many suggestions, often supported with lively examples, for gaining new insights about what might work better. Reading this well-researched book offers readers the opportunity to foster understanding and closeness, not only with casual acquaintances, but those we think we know - spouses, children, close friends. I think it is important to note that the book isn't filled with step-by-step directions or techniques for "reading"

people's minds. But gaining a new perspective about how others think can be invaluable. A changed outlook may automatically lead to new and better ways of understanding others. One of the most fascinating parts of the book for me focused on couples, including those married for many years. Most had the illusion that they could easily predict how their spouse would react or feel in a common situation. But when put to the test, Epley proves that they were often way off the mark. Many people also believe that they can size up another person. So they listen to conversations and form conclusions about what others feel and believe. Or they try to grasp another person's lifestyle and views, yet are baffled when this doesn't foster any real communication. To improve understanding, Epley suggests we examine our conclusions about other people's thoughts and beliefs. Real examples underline the importance of positive relationships. Slip-ups at work can threaten job security.

When it comes to understanding other folks, we do a fairly good job, but - according to Mr. Epley, author of this book - we botch it up by over-estimating how good we are. We have the correct tools, but we both over-use and under-use them. Epley addresses essential social survival skills (such as dehumanizing, stereotyping, empathizing, inferring, etc.) and attempts to demonstrate that our best intentions generally go awry. In the end, Pogo was right: "We have met the enemy and he is us." While the title of the book tells us it will address how we understand others, we learn that the first "other" is not someone else but our own self (see page 29 where Epley quotes Jung: "In each of us there is another whom we do not know"). This is an awfully good insight and one that should be remembered while reading the book: we will never be better at reading others while we kid ourselves about our own selves. So Mr. Epley gives us (or tries to) the tools to make us better mind readers (of our own selves and of others). I'm not sure he makes his stated case. So while this is not a bad book, it certainly does not seem to me to be a great (or even good) book. While there are a number of good/interesting insights, anecdotes, and notes throughout (who would have thought a psychology monograph would cite John Mearsheimer?), I found myself alternately intrigued and bored. The book would catch my attention and within paragraphs lose it. I found it a struggle to stay engaged. Whether my struggle came as a result of a writing style that just wasn't my cup of tea or a recognition of the trouble the author has integrating philosophy and rhetoric (and what not) into a psychology book I can't say.

With "Mindwise," Author, Financial Times' "professor to watch," and University of Chicago Booth School of Business' professor of psychology, Nicolas Epley, PhD., brings our "sixth sense" of

understanding others out of the shadows into the light of scientific inspection. This "sixth sense," an extraordinary ability to understand what others think, feel, and believe, allows us to connect with others deeply, intimately, and honestly. Unfortunately, this ability can also be the greatest source of misunderstanding, leading to damaged relationships, bitter fights, and even war."Mindwise" brings your brain's greatest ability out of the shadows and into the light, showing how, and how well we reason about our thoughts, motives, attitudes, beliefs, and emotions of others. Epley's insights, gained over two decades of scientific inspection, will serve as a guide to show how predictable malfunctions (dehumanization, egocentricity, stereotypes, and misleading information from behaviors) keep us from truly understanding the minds of others and create personal difficulties. With this knowledge as the backdrop, he sets out to show us how our ability to think about the minds of others can improve so we can be wiser in our personal and professional relationships, improving our lives and the lives of those we come into contact with."Mindwise" is organized into four parts - (Mis) Reading Minds, Does It Have a Mind?, What State Is Another Mind In?, and "Through the Eyes of Others." Some takeaways include:<sup>\*</sup> Reading minds is a sense we use with great overconfidence. We are likely to understand much less about the minds of family members and friends, neighbors, coworkers, and competitors than we guess.<sup>\*</sup> We cannot read anyone's mind perfectly.

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