



The Tell: The Little Clues That Reveal Big Truths about Who We Are

By Matthew Hertenstein

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Every day we make predictions based on limited information, in business and at home. Will this company's stock performance continue? Will the job candidate I just interviewed be a good employee? What kind of adult will my child grow up to be? We tend to dismiss our predictive minds as prone to bias and mistakes, but in *The Tell*, psychologist Matthew Hertenstein reveals that our intuition is surprisingly good at using small clues to make big predictions, and shows how we can make better decisions by homing in on the right details.

Just as expert poker players use their opponents' tells to see through their bluffs, Hertenstein shows that we can likewise train ourselves to read physical cues to significantly increase our predictive acumen. By looking for certain clues, we can accurately call everything from election results to the likelihood of marital success, IQ scores to sexual orientation—even from flimsy evidence, such as an old yearbook photo or a silent one-minute video. Moreover, by understanding how people read our body language, we can adjust our own behavior so as to ace our next job interview or tip the dating scales in our favor.

Drawing on rigorous research in psychology and brain science, Hertenstein shows us how to hone our powers of observation to increase our predictive capacities. A charming testament to the power of the human mind, *The Tell* will, to paraphrase Sherlock Holmes, show us how to notice what we see.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Drawing on poker's concept of the tell, a mannerism that can yield clues to an opponent's cards, and numerous behavioral studies in which he has been involved, psychologist Hertenstein has produced a study that is lively and engaging yet unremarkable in its conclusion that both environment and genes influence our decision-making. For example, he reveals that we're able to predict ways an adult might behave by looking at early tells; thus, infants that have insecure attachments to their parents are more likely than those with secure attachments to develop some form of psychopathology later. Various studies have found that facial features can be useful in predicting aggression or lying and cheating: In carefully controlled studies, men with wider faces were three times more willing to lie than slim-faced men. In dating, women choose men based on facial attractiveness, symmetry, smell, and masculinity, while men choose women who are attractive, youthful, and display signs of fertility. Despite the inconclusiveness of evolutionary psychology, Hertenstein offers much material to ponder and suggests that we embrace the power of these tools for helping us predict behavior, though he also cautions against an overly prescriptive use of these approaches, which could lead to harmful cultural stereotypes. 31 b&w figures. (Nov.)

Review

"*The Tell* is highly recommended."

—*Style Magazine*

"Entertaining...in the Malcolm Gladwell-ian tradition."

—*Greater Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*

"Those curious to learn about the powers of observation and the unconscious mind should definitely put this book on their to-read list."

—*Quick Book Reviews*

"Lively and engaging.... Hertenstein offers much material to ponder and suggests that we embrace the power of these tools for helping us predict behavior."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"The human brain, some have said, is a prediction machine. Sometimes our forecasts go awry, of course. But often our astonishing ability to predict helps us navigate our complex physical, social, and emotional environments. In this fascinating book, Matthew Hertenstein unpacks the secrets of our predictive abilities and shows how we can hone those abilities to become better judges of people and situations. *The Tell* is one of the year's essential reads."

—**Daniel H. Pink, author of *To Sell Is Human*, *Drive*, and *A Whole New Mind***

"An enjoyable read, particularly for nonspecialists; researchers who aspire to write for a popular audience can learn from the author's confident and informative writing style."

—**CHOICE**

"[W]ritten in a style that could have appeared in an article in *The New York Times Magazine*.... *The Tell* is both entertaining and fascinating, full of interesting information about human beings and their behavior."

—*PsycCRITIQUES*

“Verdict: Extremely relatable to the lay reader while still accessing an incredible amount of peer-reviewed scholarship, Hertenstein's work is perhaps the most comprehensive explanation of the correlation of nonverbal communication to genetics and behavior available today. Despite its nonacademic tone, this book has much to teach any reader.”

—*Library Journal Review (Starred Review)*

“An entertaining look at our oft-maligned intuitive capabilities, offering useful tips on how we may sharpen our powers of observation and increase the accuracy of our predictions.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Fascinating.... *The Tell* succeeds as an engaging tour through current work in the science of behavior by a young psychologist who has the makings of a leading contributor to his field.”

—*Shelf Awareness*

About the Author

Matthew Hertenstein is an associate professor of psychology at DePauw University in Indiana. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, and his work on non-verbal communication has been featured on national and international television and radio, including the *Today Show*, ABC News, NPR, and the BBC, and in newspapers and magazines including the *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Allure*, *Esquire*, *Prevention*, *The Economist*, *Psychology Today*, *Scientific American Mind*, and *The Guardian* (UK).

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From reader reviews:

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Lidia Hill:

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