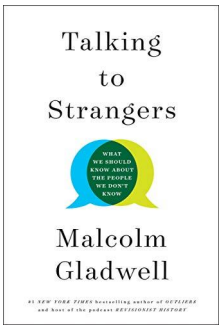

YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know about the People We Don't Know

by Malcolm Gladwell

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46 Highlights

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 29

> Hitler was a mystery. Franklin Roosevelt, the American president throughout Hitler's rise, never met him. Nor did Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader. Winston Churchill, Chamberlain's successor, came close while researching a book in Munich in 1932. He and Hitler twice made plans to meet for tea, but on both occasions Hitler stood him up.

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> Winston Churchill, for example, never believed for a moment that Hitler was anything more than a duplicitous thug. Churchill called Chamberlain's visit "the stupidest thing that has ever been done."

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 36

> The people who were right about Hitler were those who knew the least about him personally. The people who were wrong about Hitler were the ones who had talked with him for hours.

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> Mullainathan's computer, on the other hand, couldn't see the defendant and it couldn't hear anything that was said in the courtroom. All it had was the defendant's age and rap sheet. It had a fraction of the information available to the judge—and it did a much better job at making bail decisions.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 41

> Taking information away from the hiring committee made for better judgments. But that was because the information gleaned from watching someone play is largely irrelevant. If you're judging whether someone is a good violin player, knowing whether that person is big or small, handsome or homely, white or black isn't going to help. In fact, it will probably only introduce biases that will make your job even harder.

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> The conviction that we know others better than they know us—and that we may have insights about them they lack (but not vice versa)—leads us to talk when we would do well to listen and to be less patient than we ought to be when others express the conviction that they are the ones who are being misunderstood or judged unfairly.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 50

> We think we can easily see into the hearts of others based on the flimsiest of clues. We jump at the chance to judge strangers. We would never do that to ourselves, of course. We are nuanced and complex and enigmatic. But the stranger is easy. If I can convince you of one thing in this book, let it be this: Strangers are not easy.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 68

> The issue with spies is not that there is something brilliant about them. It is that there is something wrong with us.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 74

> We start by believing. And we stop believing only when our doubts and misgivings rise to the point where we can no longer explain them away.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 78

> You believe someone not because you have no doubts about them. Belief is not the absence of doubt. You believe someone because you don’t have enough doubts about them.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 91

> Madoff claimed to follow an investment strategy linked to the stock market, which meant that like any other market-based strategy, his returns ought to go up and down as the market went up and down. But Madoff’s returns were rock steady—which defied all logic.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 96

> Madoff claimed to be making his money based on heavy trading of a financial instrument known as a derivative. But there was simply no trace of Madoff in those markets.

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> Default to truth becomes an issue when we are forced to choose between two alternatives, one of which is likely and the other of which is impossible to imagine.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 131

> I believed in you always until I couldn’t anymore. Isn’t that an almost perfect statement of default to truth?

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 157

> And happiness is the emotion where there is the most agreement between the Trobrianders and the Spanish children. On everything else, the Trobrianders’ idea of what emotion looks like on the outside appears to be totally different from our own.

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> If you believe that the way a stranger looks and acts is a reliable clue to the way they feel—if you buy into the Friends fallacy—then you're going to make mistakes. Amanda Knox was one of those mistakes.

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> What Levine discovered is what psychologists always find in these cases, which is that most of us aren't very good at lie detection. On average, judges correctly identify liars 54 percent of the time—just slightly better than chance. This is true no matter who does the judging.

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> When a liar acts like an honest person, though, or when an honest person acts like a liar, we're flummoxed. Nervous Nelly is mismatched. She looks like she's lying, but she's not. She's just nervous! In other words, human beings are not bad lie detectors. We are bad lie detectors in those situations when the person we're judging is mismatched.

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> Madoff was mismatched. He was a liar with the demeanor of an honest man. And Ocrant—who knew, on an intellectual level, that something was not right—was so swayed by meeting Madoff that he dropped the story. Can you blame him? First there is default to truth, which gives the con artist a head start. But when you add mismatch to that, it's not hard to understand why Madoff fooled so many for so long.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 182

> Why can't someone be angry in response to a murder, rather than sad? If you were Amanda Knox's friend, none of this would surprise you. You would have seen Knox walking down the street like an elephant. But with strangers, we're intolerant of emotional responses that fall outside expectations.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 185

> We need help with mismatched strangers—the difficult cases. A trained interrogator ought to be adept at getting beneath the confusing signals of demeanor, at understanding that when Nervous Nelly overexplains and gets defensive, that's who she is—someone who overexplains and gets defensive.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 186

> But Tim Levine's research suggests that they aren't random—that we have built a world that systematically discriminates against a class of people who, through no fault of their own, violate our ridiculous ideas about transparency.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 207

> Many of those who study alcohol no longer consider it an agent of disinhibition. They think of it as an agent of myopia.

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> It creates, in their words, “a state of shortsightedness in which superficially understood, immediate aspects of experience have a disproportionate influence on behavior and emotion.” Alcohol makes the thing in the foreground even more salient and the thing in the background less significant.

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> Drinking puts you at the mercy of your environment. It crowds out everything except the most immediate experiences.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 216

> Alcohol also finds its way to your cerebellum, at the very back of the brain, which is involved in balance and coordination. That’s why you start to stumble and stagger when intoxicated.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 216

> Alcohol hits the hippocampus—small, sausage-like regions on each side of the brain that are responsible for forming memories about our lives.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 218

> That’s the way blackouts work. At or around the 0.15 mark, the hippocampus shuts down and memories stop forming, but it is entirely possible that the frontal lobes, cerebellum, and amygdala of that same drinker—at the same time—can continue to function more or less normally.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 227

> Emily Doe has no memory of meeting Brock Turner, no memory of whether she did or didn’t dance with him, no memory of whether she did or didn’t kiss him, did or didn’t agree to go back to his dorm, and no memory of whether she was a willing or unwilling participant in their sexual activity. Did she resist when they left the party? Did she struggle? Did she flirt with him? Did she just stumble, blindly, after him? We’ll never know.

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> Turner was asked to do something of crucial importance that night—to make sense of a stranger’s desires and motivations. That is a hard task for all of us under the best circumstances, because the assumption of transparency we rely on in those encounters is so flawed. Asking a drunk and immature nineteen-year-old to do that, in the hypersexualized chaos of a frat party, is an invitation to disaster.

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> Nor is it just a matter of weight. There are also meaningful differences in the way the sexes metabolize alcohol. Women have much less water in their bodies than men, with the result that alcohol enters their bloodstream much more quickly.

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> But Morgan's point was that if the information they were sharing had been obtained under stress—if they had just been through some nightmare in Iraq or Afghanistan or Syria—what they said might be inaccurate or misleading, and the sources wouldn't know it. They would say, It's the doctor! I know it was the doctor, even though the doctor was a thousand miles away.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 267

> And of every occupational category, poets have far and away the highest suicide rates—as much as five times higher than the general population.

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> If suicide is coupled, then it isn't simply the act of depressed people. It's the act of depressed people at a particular moment of extreme vulnerability and in combination with a particular, readily available lethal means.

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> Or consider the inexplicable saga of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. Since it opened in 1937, it has been the site of more than 1,500 suicides. No other place in the world has seen as many people take their lives in that period.4

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> What does coupling theory tell us about the Golden Gate Bridge? That it would make a big difference if a barrier prevented people from jumping, or a net was installed to catch them before they fell. The people prevented from killing themselves on the bridge wouldn't go on to jump off something else. Their decision to commit suicide is coupled to that particular bridge.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 278

> Seiden followed up on 515 people who had tried to jump from the bridge between 1937 and 1971, but had been unexpectedly restrained. Just 25 of those 515 persisted in killing themselves some other way. Overwhelmingly, the people who want to jump off the Golden Gate Bridge at a given moment want to jump off the Golden Gate Bridge only at that given moment.

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> And every place they looked, they saw the same thing: Crime in every city was concentrated in a tiny number of street segments.

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> Weisburd refers to this as the Law of Crime Concentration.6 Like suicide, crime is tied to very specific places and contexts. Weisburd's experiences in the 72nd Precinct and in Minneapolis are not idiosyncratic. They capture something close to a fundamental truth about human behavior. And that means that when you confront the stranger, you have to ask yourself where and when you're confronting the stranger—because those two things powerfully influence your interpretation of who the stranger is.

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> Today's cars emit so little carbon monoxide that the gas barely registers in automobile exhaust. It is much more difficult to commit suicide today by turning on your car and closing the door of the garage.

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> A very conservative estimate is that banning handguns would save 10,000 lives a year, just from thwarted suicides. That's a lot of people.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 304

> The Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution protects citizens from "unreasonable searches and seizures." That's why the police cannot search your home without a warrant.

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> Outside District 144, where police business was conducted as usual, crime remained as bad as ever. But inside 144? All of the new focused police work cut gun crimes—shootings, murders, woundings—in half.

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> There is something about the idea of coupling—of the notion that a stranger's behavior is tightly connected to place and context—that eludes us. It leads us to misunderstand some of our greatest poets, to be indifferent to the suicidal, and to send police officers on senseless errands.

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> To assume the best about another is the trait that has created modern society. Those occasions when our trusting nature gets violated are tragic. But the alternative—to abandon trust as a defense against predation and deception—is worse.

> The only real lesson is that people are all over the map when it comes to when and how much they smile, or look you in the eye, or how fluidly they talk. And to try to find any kind of pattern in that behavior is impossible.