

Manual for Cold Reading Workshop

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Science :: A Foreword

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www.deceptionary.com

The notion of “science” is widely misunderstood (unsurprising, as there is a non-stop parade of charlatans who profit by making it so). Science is not a body of knowledge, a collection of laws, or a set of beliefs. It is not a disembodied clique of elitist academics. It is not explicitly anti- or pro- anything. Many (most?) things labelled “science”—including my own field of “computer science”—are not, in fact, science at all.

Science is a *methodology*, a discipline-independent set of tools used to ascertain information about the nature of the real world: more specifically, to discern fact from fiction. Science is an extensive set of techniques—from replication to falsification, from peer review to double blind—used to determine whether or not a notion (a “hypothesis”) can rightfully be considered correct (a “theory”). This is as far as science can take us: it does not “prove” things (that’s mathematics). The most science can claim is that something is, to the best of current knowledge and understanding, true (i.e., a fact).

And just as theories evolve over time (as we amass additional information pertaining to them), so do the tools of science itself evolve (as we learn more about how best to evaluate the validity of evidence). Hence my favourite definition, from the late physicist and educator, Richard Feynman, who explained that “*Science is what we have learned about how not to fool ourselves.*”

And that is where Ray Hyman comes in.

Ray cares a lot about *how we fool ourselves*. He is a Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Oregon (and has held distinguished positions at Harvard, Stanford, & Simon Fraser Universities). He is arguably the foremost academic authority on cold reading, a topic inextricably involved with exactly that: people fooling themselves.

Dr. Hyman was not always so evolved: he began his journey as a successful shut-eye palmist, a cheiromancer, a mitt reader. I will leave to him the story of what (and who) changed his perspective in this regard, but that change led him to switch his major from journalism to psychology, launching his career as an explorer of what causes people to believe weird things.

Over the years, Ray conducted a series of workshops, the first taking place in Oostende, Belgium on 25 September, 1994, the last in Las Vegas, USA on 15 July, 2012. If you were fortunate enough to participate in one of these, you emerged a neophyte cold reader, having successfully delivered readings to people you previously didn’t know.

What follows is the most recent (2012) version of the training manual received by those students; bear in mind that it is addressed primarily to an audience of skeptics.

With that said, I turn you over to my friend ... Professor Ray Hyman.

Introduction

Each participant in the Workshop on Cold Reading will receive a copy of this manual. Because this workshop lasts only two hours, we will not have time to cover several issues. My previous workshops have typically lasted a full day. This workshop we will provide you the opportunity to conduct a cold reading. We will also briefly allude to reasons why cold reading works. Of course, we will not be able to cover all the cold reading techniques and we will only touch upon some of the powerful reasons why cold reading 'works.' I hope this manuscript will make up for this deficit. I have included material that will help you to succeed at cold reading as well as understand why it "works."

Some Background to this Manual

I began reading palms for profit when I was a teenager. I did not believe that palmistry possessed any validity. I was trying to make a living as a magician, mentalist and a performer in related arts such as memory demonstrations and hypnosis. I added palm reading as simply another way to make money. To my surprise, all my clients not only took it seriously but also had no doubt that I could divine their innermost secrets. I was aware of how fortune telling makes use of "glittering generalities" and how people will assimilate what the reader says to their own specific circumstances. However, the palmistry books that I consulted provided very specific information. For example a break in the headline that occurs one-third of the way across the palm, indicates, according to palmistry, that the client had a serious condition related to the head or brain around 30 years of age. I was surprised how often the client would validate such seemingly concrete statements.

As a sophomore in college, majoring in journalism, I was sure that the shape and lines of the hand revealed insights into the person whose hands I was reading. A friend, the late magician and mentalist, Stanley Jaks, suggested that I try reading a client's hand the opposite to what the lines indicated. The reading was a huge success in spite of the seemingly concrete statements. I tried giving wrong readings on some more clients with the same outcome. Whatever contributed to the success of palmistry readings obviously had nothing to do with the lines and shape of the hands.

Because of this experience, I changed my major from journalism to psychology. I thought that psychology would help me explain why palmistry, as well as other divinatory systems, "works." After I began majoring in psychology, I was dismayed to discover that many psychologists took seriously as the Rorschach and other projective tests. Since I also studied statistics and research methods, I devoted some time to evaluating the evidence for such tests. I discovered that the empirical evidence failed to validate these projective tests. Yet the majority of personality and clinical psychologists believed they were indispensable tools for uncovering hidden truths about the psyche.

My first academic position was as Assistant Professor of Psychology at Harvard University from 1953-1958. At that time, the graduate students in Personality and Clinical Psychology had to devote a year to mastering the Rorschach Test and the Murray Thematic Apperception Test. Yet, my survey of the empirical evidence revealed no evidence for the validity of these procedures. The major textbook on projective tests included a chapter on handwriting analysis. Obviously, some major academic psychologists resembled my former palmistry clients in believing diagnostic procedures that had no demonstrated validity.

Two Harvard undergraduates worked under my supervision to study why individuals accept general personality statements as uniquely true of themselves. In 1955, I wrote a paper, "The Psychological Reading: An Infallible Technique for Winning Admiration and Popularity". I did not publish this paper, but used it as a handout in my various classes. This unpublished paper became the basis for my article, "Cold Reading': How to Convince Strangers that You Know All About Them," *The Zetetic (now known as The Skeptical Inquirer)*, Spring/Summer 1977. This paper has been republished several times in various sources.

My 1977 article on Cold Reading was the inspiration for the initial version of this manual for my first workshop on cold reading. I conducted this workshop for the European Skeptics Conference at Oostende, Belgium, September 25, 1994. I subsequently updated the syllabus for workshops that I conducted in Rossdorf, Germany in May 1999 and later for workshops that I conducted in Rossdorf and Ghent, Belgium in May 1999. I keep tweaking and updating the manual for the several workshops I have conducted since. The last revision before the present version was in 2006.

Goals for This Workshop

I have a number of goals for this workshop. I expect you have your own goals for what you wish to get from this workshop. I hope that our mutual goals overlap. Given unlimited time, I would like to accomplish the goals listed below.. My past workshops on Cold Reading have lasted for a day. The present workshop is scheduled for under two hours. Obviously I cannot expect to achieve all these goals during the workshop. Instead, I will focus on a few of them and simply allude to the others.

1. Familiarize You with "Psychic" and Cold Readings

At the very least, I hope you learn something useful about "psychic" and cold readings. Most of you have some familiarity with this activity. Some of you may have had one or more readings. Some of you may have friends who have had such readings. Many of you may have seen others receive a reading. "Psychic" readings often occur on television and radio programs. In this workshop, I want to look at such readings in a more analytic and skeptical manner.

2. Teach You How to Give Successful "Psychic" Readings

I want to provide you some hands-on experience in actually doing readings. I do not expect you to become, in the course of an hour's experience, a super-"psychic." However, I am confident that you will be able to give a reading that will satisfy most of your clients. I am not trying to turn out more "psychic" readers. Rather, I want to convince you how easy it is to impress your client. *The key to a successful reading is not in the talents of the reader but in the constructive and imaginative activities of the client. If you can succeed in getting the client to cooperate, you can succeed as a reader.*

3. Enable You to Understand Why the "Psychic" Reading "Works"

Make no mistake about it. The "Psychic" Reading "works." This is regardless of whether it is given by a shut-eye or a cold reader. I put "works" in scare quotes because the evidence for the reading's success relies on data that are quite compelling psychologically, but are meaningless from a scientific perspective. As I will emphasize later, for a psychologist, or any scientist, the criteria for deciding if "Psychic" Readings "work" differ greatly from the criteria used by people, and even some scientists, in their daily life. Larry King, the supporters of John Edward, and the millions of people who believe that readings "work" rely on personal and subjective validation. The reading "works" if the client says it is accurate or is otherwise satisfied. This is what we call personal validation. Despite its widespread and universal use, personal validation is useless from a scientific standpoint. We want to make sure that you know why personal validation can be so compelling and yet so wrong.

4. Help You to Understand What Distinguishes Adequate from Inadequate Evidence for the Validity of a Reading or of Readings in General

Here we encounter the often highly technical realm of scientific methodology. This includes such concepts as reliability, validity, variables (independent, dependent, concomitant, control, random), statistical inference (significance, power, confidence intervals, Type I and Type II errors, post hoc testing, etc.), experimental and quasi-experimental methodology (double-blind, counterbalancing, randomization, matching, control comparisons, etc.), etc. This involves complexities that often trip up even the most experienced researchers. That is why we have peer reviewing and continuing scrutiny and controversy within the various domains of scientific inquiry. I do not expect to make you experts at evaluating paranormal claims that allegedly rely on scientific research. However, I hope to convey enough to make you aware of the issues.

5. Improve Your Ability to Debate, Critique, and/or Counter Paranormal Claims, Especially in the Public Arena

Often skeptics and critics find themselves confronted with claims and "evidence" for which they are insufficiently prepared. Some years ago, I wrote a paper, "On Proper Criticism" as a way of providing some guidance for skeptics when confronted with outrageous claims. Here

I want to focus on the difficult task of public relations. How can you counter arguments by paranormalists in a way that appeals to the public without compromising the logical and scientific basis for your position? This is very difficult, if not impossible, to do in some public forums. How do you explain the intricacies of a statistical argument within the confines of a sound bite?

I will not have time to cover this in the workshop. However, I hope that what you do learn in the workshop will help you better get the skeptic's message across.

Agenda and Activities



If there were sufficient time, I would like the workshop to consist of six segments. Each segment corresponds to knowledge and skills that I believe are important for understanding cold reading and why it can be so effective. I could have considered additional segments such as how to cope with arguments from proponents of psychic readings. Practically, we will not have time to consider adequately each of the six segments. I will focus mainly on segments 2 and 4. The goal of segment 2 is to enable you to give convincing readings to strangers. This will show you how powerful the reading can be. It will also show you that just about anyone can convince others that he or she is a powerful psychic. The goal of segment 4 is to help you understand the psychological reasons why the reading appears to 'work.' We will not have time to do much with segment 5, but this is an essential component of dealing with 'psychic' readings. This raises the very important question of how do we test scientifically the claims of readers.

Segment 1: Introduction to "Psychic" and Cold Readings

This session will provide samples of actual readings using video and audiotapes. We will focus especially on the readings of the United Kingdom's superstar 'psychic', Christian Dion. We will also hear a reading given by Ray Hyman, basing his style upon Dion's pattern. Hyman gave his reading on a call-in talk show

Segment 2: You Too Can Guru: Hands-on Experience in Giving a Reading

This session is the centerpiece of the workshop. Each participant will pair up with another participant—preferably one who is a stranger. Each member of a pair will conduct a Systematic Scan on his or her partner. I will explain how to do this scan before the exercise. After you have completed your scan, you will use the input from the scan to deliver a reading to your partner. Time permitting; I will give you additional pointers for organizing the results of your scan into an organized script and for making the reading even more effective. The exercise aims to convince you how easy it is for anyone to provide a reading that will impress a client.

Segment 3: Mediums and Communicating With the Dead

We will not have time to deal with this topic. I include it here, however, to make you aware of it. Fortunately, much of what you will learn in this workshop applies to the readings that mediums provide. Mediums purportedly convey messages from departed friends and relatives of the sitter (client). There is a long history of attempts by scientists and other scholars to investigate scientifically the possibility of communicating with the spirits of the dead. Many scientists, including some eminent ones and Nobel Laureates, have concluded that at least some mediums actually do communicate with the dead. The same principles that convince clients of psychic readers operate in this realm. See the analysis of an unedited transcript near the end of the manual of John Edward doing his shtick on the Larry King show.

Segment 4: Why does it “Work?” Why Is It So Compelling—Even For Otherwise Intelligent and Competent Scholars?

Here is where we get into the reasons—psychological, social, and others—for why people so readily accept the validity of their readings. The reading is a subtype of the prototypical communication situation between two or more individuals. The prototypical communication situation is governed by implicit rules (conversational postulates and the like). These postulates carry over to the 'psychic' reading. As we will see, the client creates the meaning in the reading. Again, time will only permit for a brief introduction to the cognitive, social, linguistic, and emotional factors that make the reading such a compelling experience. However, I have tried to include most of what you need to know in the manual that I provide to each participant.

Segment 5: Exercise: Evaluating the Evidence

How to evaluate the evidence for the validity of a `psychic` reading is important. It is not enough for the skeptic to argue that `psychic` readings are invalid. You should know what sort of evidence would count in support of the validity. In addition, what sort of evidence would challenge the evidence? Unfortunately, the proper methodology can involve technical and subtle issues not available to the average skeptic. We will not have time to take this up in this workshop. The exercise that I put at the end of manual (in the Appendix) may help sensitize you to some of the problems.

Segment 6: Overview and Summary.

We will take a few minutes to summarize what we have accomplished and where to go from here

MANUAL ON COLD READING

I have given you some of the background to this manual in my preceding statements. I should add that the Italian Skeptic's group, CSICAP, published my manual as a book, *Manuale di cold reading: Come fingere di sapere tutto sul conto degli altri*. Milan, 2007. James Randi wrote a lengthy introduction and Giacomo De Carlo added an appendix describing his Cold Reading Computer program. [The translates into English as: "Manual on Cold Reading: How to pretend to know everything about another person."]

How to Use This Manual

I have tried to make this manuscript a self-contained manual on the psychic and cold readings. In other words, I believe that it contains everything you need to understand and perform successful readings. I suggest you absorb it in small doses. Most likely, you will be able to succeed as a `psychic` reader by applying only one or two suggestions from the manuscript. Once you have tried doing readings using just one or two ploys described in this document, then read more and try to add a few more ploys to your repertoire. Eventually, you will find that your readings will far surpass those of the typical readers who are plying their trade on a daily basis.

Although, as I said, I have tried to make this manual relatively complete, you may find it useful to look at what others have written about cold readings. For this purpose, I have appended an annotated bibliography. I have tried to make the annotations informative. Many of the books and pamphlets on cold reading are difficult, if not impossible, for lay people to obtain. In addition, they are extremely overpriced (the marketers claim that this high pricing keeps the material out of the hands of the merely curious).

Some Preliminary Remarks

My intent is not to provide the world with more `psychics.` Instead, I want to impress you with the power of this miniature social situation. I provide you with the ten `secrets' of cold reading. Why ten? Admittedly, there is nothing magical about this number. I could have listed the five or the twenty secrets of cold reading. In fact, I believe there really are no secrets to cold reading. Just about anyone can do it. In addition, just about any method for doing it will "work."

Indeed, we can collapse all the advice into one secret: *just do it!* If you know how to talk, you can do a successful cold reading. At the end of the manuscript, I provide you with some references to books that claim to teach you how to read people's character, predict their future, or give them advice. If you follow the advice in these references, you will succeed. Your success, however, will not depend on the specific techniques and advice that the authors provide. You can employ other techniques and succeed just as well.

What if what you tell your client is wrong? What if you tell them they are introverted when they believe they are extroverted? What if you tell them they are having problems with their marriage when their marriage is just fine? Unbelievably, it does not make much difference. No matter how specific and concrete you try to be, what you say will always be ambiguous. This is because language is inherently ambiguous. The words and sentences, by themselves, do not—and cannot—contain the complete meaning in a communication. The words and sentences, in actual communication, convey meaning only in the context of a total situation. Language is just one component of this total situation.

Language gathers its power from its ambiguity, which provides a great deal of flexibility to enlist the context, and shared assumptions of those participating in communication. Language, stripped of its context, is inherently ambiguous. We do not experience it as ambiguous because we automatically bring to each linguistic encounter shared assumptions and clues that provide us with an apparently unambiguous interpretation. Our intercourse with the world and with each other functions so automatically and smoothly in most cases that we do not realize that much of what we understand and perceive depends crucially upon the assumptions and knowledge that we bring to bear to each encounter. Our ability to make assumptions and to assimilate what impinges upon our senses to what we already know is what makes us superior to any other system that has to cope with the world.

Unfortunately, this very powerful ability to anticipate and supplement the inputs from the outside world makes us vulnerable to the illusions of the cold reading.

Where Does the Meaning of a Reading Come From?

Almost everyone is a victim of a very strong illusion. This illusion is that the utterances or

sentences in a book *contain* the meaning that they convey. Scholars debate endlessly about such things as the correct interpretation of Hamlet's soliloquy. The hidden assumption in such debates is that the total and correct meaning is entirely contained in the words used to convey it. This *illusion of meaning*, as I will call it, is what makes skeptics so incredulous when the believers find deep meaning in what, to the skeptic, is obvious nonsense. This illusion of meaning is so deeply ingrained in all of us that we fail to understand that utterances and sentences *never contain or completely determine the underlying meaning*. At best, the utterances and sentences *constrain* the possible meanings, but the specific meaning that they convey in any situation depends upon context, shared knowledge and understanding between communicator and listener, and the beliefs and expectations of the listener.

How does this apply to the psychic reading? Simply put, the meaning that the client gets from a reading is only partially constrained by the specific words of the reader. If the client believes that the reader is wise and has access to privileged knowledge--especially knowledge about the client and the client's situation--then the reading will convey one meaning. If, on the other hand, the client believes that the psychic has no special powers and has no occult knowledge of the client's situation, then the identical reading will convey an entirely different meaning. Given the client's assumptions and beliefs, his or her interpretation of the reading makes sense.

Such "making sense" of otherwise ambiguous or vague utterances is the basis of all human communication. This point is so important, especially for those of us who want to understand better how the psychic reading 'works', that we will devote some discussion during the workshop to it. To get you started thinking about it I will provide two examples. The first comes from an experiment published by Lorge in 1936 on 'prestige suggestion.' In experiments on prestige suggestion, the experimenter shows one group of subjects a product that he attributes to a prestigious individual. The experimenter shows another group of subjects the same statement or product that but attributes it to a less prestigious individual. If the first group judges the product more favorably than the second group, this would be an example of prestige suggestion. Lorge showed that this apparently holds for other situations. In one case, he had his subjects rate their approval of quotations by famous individuals. An example was the quotation:

I hold it that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms are in the physical.

When the Lorge told his subjects that the author of this statement was Thomas Jefferson, most of them approved of the statement and rated it favorably. When he gave other subjects the identical quotation and told them that the author was Lenin, they disagreed with it and rated it unfavorably. Lorge treated this as an example of irrational behavior. Why should the agreement with the identical statement vary depending who said it? After all, the content and meaning of the statement are the same in both cases.

The psychologist Solomon Asch, in 1948, published a lengthy critique of Lorge's conclusions. He showed that the subjects were reacting to two different meanings. Those who

believed Lenin was the author and who also believed that Lenin was a ruthless tyrant, interpreted the statement as advocating bloody conflicts. According to Asch, this was a rational interpretation given their beliefs about Lenin. Those who were told Jefferson was the author [Jefferson was actually the author] and believed that Jefferson was a democrat and peaceful political leader, interpreted the statement as advocating political debate and peaceful changes of government. Again, according to Asch, this was a legitimate interpretation given their beliefs and assumptions about Jefferson. Thus, the identical set of words, according to Asch, had at least two entirely different meanings depending upon the context in which they occurred.

Here is a statement that occurred in a children's story. *The Policeman held up his hand and stopped the car.* Children apparently read this sentence and have no trouble understanding what it says. I am sure that you also find the statement easy to understand. Consider, however, what information you would have to supply to a computer program in order to enable it to understand this statement. What *does* this statement mean? Are other meanings possible? Think about this. We will discuss this during the workshop. Does this give you additional insights into what might be taking place during a psychic reading?

The statement *The Policeman held up his hand and stopped the car* appears unambiguous. In my classes, students from all parts of the world have no trouble understanding it. They all envision a situation in which an individual in a distinct uniform is standing at a traffic intersection. He holds his hand up with palm facing the oncoming traffic. The drivers see this and realize that this is a signal for them to step on their brakes, which causes their vehicles to come to a halt. However, imagine that this very same sentence occurred in a story involving two individuals by the name of Clark Kent and Lois Lane. As part of the plot for this episode, Clark Kent happens to be wearing a police officer's uniform. Some villains have captured Lois Lane, tied her up, placed her in the back seat of an automobile, which is atop one of San Francisco's hills, and released the brakes. Clark Kent, who as we know has supernormal vision, sees the car hurtling down the hill. He rushes to the bottom of that hill. It is at this point in the story that the sentence *The Policeman held up his hand and stopped the car* occurs. The same sentence is now describing a different situation.

With some effort, I am sure that you can think of other contexts that would provide still other interpretations for this sentence. Although this seemingly concrete statement is actually ambiguous, its structure does constrain the range of possible alternatives. The police officer is clearly the agent and the car is clearly the object of the action. 'Psychics' and mediums throw out utterances that constrain possible interpretations even less. For example, a typical medium might say something like *I get the impression of someone, possibly dressed in a uniform—such as that of policeman or a fireman—and also some sort of vehicle such as a car or wagon.* This forces the dedicated sitter to find a situation or event in her life that could match the utterance. Perhaps the sitter's son had been a soldier who died while driving a tank. The client would consider this a striking hit.

Preliminaries

I will use the term *psychic reading* to refer to any situation in which a person provides a client with a description of his or her character, personality, and life events—past, present, and future. I consider such a description different from that which would be provided by a professional psychologist. The information provided in the psychic reading is attributed to a source—occult, paranormal, or otherwise—that is not recognized by science. Psychic readings include those done by astrologers, tarot card readers, numerologists, crystal gazers, mediums, channelers, physiognomists, palm readers, graphologists and others. Psychic readers can be categorized into *shut-eyes* and *cold readers*. A *shut-eye* is a psychic reader who actually believes in the validity of her technique. She is as much a victim of the illusion as is her client. A *cold reader* is a person who does not necessarily believe in the validity of her technique. Instead, she consciously exploits whatever information she can obtain about the client to enhance the apparent validity of her reading. *Cold reading* is a procedure for convincing the client that you know intimate details about his or her life allegedly through psychic means. In reality, the cold reader exploits the ambiguity of language, the readiness of the client to assimilate whatever is said to his or her particular circumstances, as well as clues such as clothing, posture, body-language, etc. [Some commentators further distinguish *cold reading* from *hot reading*. The cold reader works with clients for whom he has no prior knowledge. The hot reader gives her reading based on prior information which she has secretly gathered without the client's knowledge.]

Like other natural concepts, the term “cold reader” is a fuzzy concept. Max Maven and I have been looking into the origins of this term. So far, we can trace its usage back to middle of the 1940s. A key feature is the idea that a reader encounters a client whom she has never previously met and about whom she has no prior information. Yet, she is able to give him a reading (completely ‘cold’) that convinces him that she knows everything about him. Another feature is that the reader uses observations about the client (clothes, jewelry, age, etc.) and feedback during the reading to customize the reading for the client.. None of these features is essential and different commentators use the term in different ways. Some people call it a cold reading even when the reader delivers a stock or prepared reading without relying on observations or feedback. Some call what a ‘psychic’ who actually believes she is employing occult powers as doing a cold reading.

I assume—at least I hope—that the participants in this workshop do not plan to become professional cold readers. So the first question is why are you here? What do you hope to get out of this workshop? Do you want to learn how to do cold readings to make a point? If so, under what circumstances do you intend to do the cold readings? For one person at a time? As a demonstration for a large audience? In informal social settings? In formal lectures and presentations? On television or radio? Alternatively, perhaps you are more interested in knowing how cold reading works as a way of understanding why people can be fooled? These are among some of the questions you should consider as you engage in this workshop and study the syllabus.

SECRET #1: You can succeed as a reader by simply using one of the standard divination systems—astrology, tarot, face reading, numerology, runes, graphology, etc. Choose whichever one most appeals to you. Get a book. Learn the system. Then apply it as instructed. You will find that your readings 'work' in the sense that most of your clients will testify that your reading was impressive and accurate. As long as you do your reading as if you believe in the system—or at least take it seriously and show respect for the client—you are almost certain to succeed. Of course, if you supplement this conventional reading with some of the tools of the cold reader, you can greatly increase the effectiveness of your reading.

I should make one final comment here. No matter how you present your reading, the clients will take what you say seriously. You should take care about what seeds or thoughts you plant in their mind. I know of many people who were told, sometimes in jest, that their short lifeline meant that they would die young. These people worried needlessly about this for years to come. [In this context, please read the letters to the columnist Ann Landers that I have included in the bibliography.]

SOME SAMPLE READINGS

One way to become a good reader is to observe psychic readers in action. Have readers give you a reading. Observe, when you can, readings of others. You will find many of these rather poor. Some will be impressive. In both cases, you can learn much from observing. In this section, I provide three sample readings. One comes from a classic psychology experiment. The other two were actual readings delivered to people who phoned a radio station to get a reading from a 'psychic.'

Forer's Sketch

In 1949, Bertram R. Forer published his now classic article *The Fallacy of Personal Validation: A Classroom Demonstration of Gullibility*. Forer gave the 39 students in his class a personality test. One week later "each student was given a typed personality sketch with his name written on it." Each student thought the sketch he or she received was based on the results of the personality test they had taken. In fact, each student received the same identical personality sketch consisting of 13 statements that Forer had taken from a newsstand astrology book. After reading the personality sketch, the students 1) rated on a scale of zero (poor) to five (perfect) how effective the personality test was in revealing personality; 2) rated on a scale of zero to five the degree to which the personality description "reveals basic characteristics of your personality"; 3) checked each statement as true or false "about yourself."

The results showed that only one student rated the personality inventory below four. In

rating the sketch as a whole there were five ratings below four. Sixteen (41%) of the 39 students rated the personality sketch as perfect. Twenty-eight (72%) of the 39 students accepted 10 or more of the 13 statements as true of themselves. The thirteen statements of Forer's sketch are listed below:

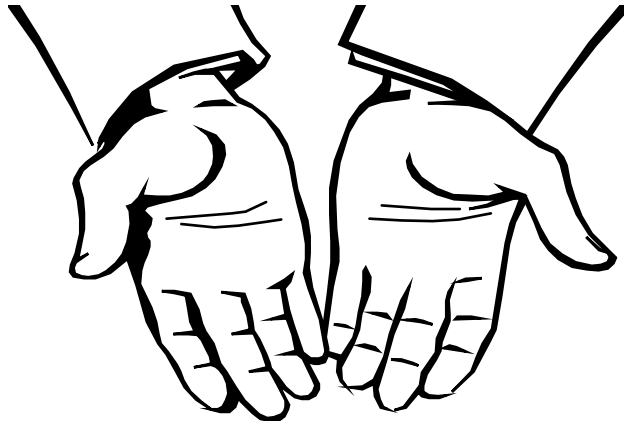
1. *You have a great need for other people to like and admire you.*
2. *You have a tendency to be critical of yourself.*
3. *You have a great deal of unused capacity that you have not turned to your advantage.*
4. *While you have some personality weaknesses, you are generally able to compensate for them.*
5. *Your sexual adjustment has presented problems for you.*
6. *Disciplined and self-controlled outside, you tend to be worrisome and insecure inside.*
7. *At times you have serious doubts as to whether you have made the right decision or done the right thing.*
8. *You prefer a certain amount of change and variety and become dissatisfied when hemmed in by restrictions and limitations.*
9. *You pride yourself as an independent thinker and do not accept others' statements without satisfactory proof.*
10. *You have found it unwise to be too frank in revealing yourself to others.*
11. *At times you are extroverted, affable, sociable, while at other times you are introverted, wary, reserved.*
12. *Some of your aspirations tend to be pretty unrealistic.*
13. *Security is one of your major goals in life.*

Researchers have replicated Forer's experiment many times with the same results. Forer's exact sketch has been used in most of these replications. The sketch works just as well today as it did in 1949. Randi repeated Forer's experiment on his recent *NOVA* television show. He used Forer's sketch and the college student volunteers all agreed that the sketch was accurate and uniquely descriptive of them. The sketch will be accepted by the client as an accurate self-description as distinct from others *provided the client believes that the description is based upon information that he or she has supplied the reader*. This is the problem of individuation. Snyder (1974) gave his subjects a general horoscope sketch under three conditions. One group got the description and was told that it was generally true of people. The second group got the description under the belief that it was based on the *year and month* they were born. The third group got the description under the belief that it was based on the *year, month, and day* that they were born.

All the subjects rated the degree to which the horoscope description fit them on a 5-point scale: (1= very poor, 2=poor, 3=average, 4=good, 5=excellent). The mean acceptance ratings for the three groups were: "generally true of people" 3.24; year-month 3.76; year-month-day 4.38. This trend of the acceptance ratings to increase with degree of specificity of information supplied was statistically significant. Snyder concluded, "High acceptance of horoscope interpretations partially stems from the general nature of the statements, but also appears to stem from the individual's belief that the horoscope is derived specifically on the basis of his or her birth

datum."

Cold readers have adopted Forer's sketch. One has marketed an audiocassette and booklet



based upon Forer's sketch. This reader claims that he has successfully given readings at private parties and psychic fairs using only Forer's sketch. When he gives readings under which the clients can hear each other's reading, he disguises the fact that he is telling each one the same thing by basing each reading on only a few of the statements. He simply uses a different combination of statements for each client.

SECRET #2: You can deliver a successful reading simply by memorizing Forer's sketch--or a similar `stock spiel'-- and conveying it to the client as if you intend it specifically for him or her. The key to making this succeed is *individuation*--convincing the client you based the reading on information or signs that you obtained from the client. If you can convince the client that this description applies *specifically* to him or her, then the reading the client will accept the reading as accurately portraying him or her as distinct from other individuals.. Of course, you have to hide or disguise the fact that you are giving the identical `stock spiel' to every client.

Christian Dion

Christian Dion is a highly successful London `psychic' who gives private readings and also does public readings on London Broadcasting Corporation (LBC). During his radio broadcast, listeners phone the program to get a reading. Dion may give from six to 10 separate readings during a broadcast. In the late 1980s, the magician David Berglas, who was also at that time the chair of the London CSICOP group, offered Christian Dion a monetary reward if he

could demonstrate that his readings were valid. Dr. Robert Morris, who occupies the Arthur Koestler chair of parapsychology at the University of Edinburgh, was asked to devise a suitable test of Christian's powers. Morris appeared on an LBC broadcast to discuss his findings. Morris concluded that he could not decide whether Dion's readings were truly valid or not. The problem was that Dion would submit only to tests of the sort that could not be evaluated by scientific procedures. During the same program many callers defended Dion and testified to how their readings by Dion--both private and public--had resulted in his telling them information that he could not have gotten through normal means and how his predictions had come true.

Christian Dion is an effective and successful reader. We do not know if he is a 'shut eye'--someone who truly believes in his powers--or simply an excellent cold reader. He is worth studying if you want to learn how to do cold readings. Ideally, you would need to listen to several of his readings to detect underlying patterns. I will play some of his readings during the workshop. Here is from a transcript of one his readings on LBC on October 27, 1987:

Karen: Hello Christian.

Dion: Hello Karen. How are you?

Karen: Fine thank you. How are you?

Dion: Very good. West Hampstead. Oh, well, very trendy. As usual, we pick out the ten cards¹, plonk you in the middle, and see what we can come up with. A couple of things actually sort of turned up very fast. One is sort of hovering around property concerns and sort of ideas or opportunities to make changes and I'll come back to that.

Karen: Right.

Dion: But is it particularly that within sort of career-stroke-business that you have been contemplating making the bigger changes, so to speak?

Karen: That's right. Yes.

Dion: Yes, because it's like 'shall I, can I'. Now I feel that this has been, if we look back with you over the last two to three months particularly--that's the kind of sort of length of time that it's been sort of revolving around you. And as you go forward from now to sort of the January time, (Karen "Yes") everything sort of falls into place. (K "Yes"). But I just want to ask you, apart from yourself dithering, who has actually been trying to sort of dissuade you from either making these changes or putting these changes into effect?

Karen: You mean career prospects?

Dion: Yes.

Karen: Um, somebody in the family.

Dion: Somebody in the family.

Karen: Hmm.

¹ Christian Dion use Tarot cards for his readings. Just before he reads a client on the air, he quickly deals out a spread of 10 cards. He uses the classic Celtic Cross.

Dion: *Um. Without being rude to them, you're not taking too much notice of them, are you?*

Karen: *No.*

Dion: *Good, that's fair enough. Because I don't think...you see I think they're looking at it in a situation that where you are it's like say in a proper job, if you follow me. It's like you know that old expression, "Oh, you've got a proper job and you're secure and all that kind of thing" (K "right"). Now I'm not saying that it isn't, but I feel that the opportunities that are lying in front of you, and this is why I think you've been inspired to sort of shift and make changes, are more important in the long term (K "yes"). Now I do feel that will bring along with it the opportunity or the necessity for you to make a change of your personal home (K "yes"). Now the only thing I can't say whether this is like selling and then buying one or just moving, because it's only brought a move with it, so I just have to as it comes tell you (K "Okay"). But I do feel that it will, um, as you go through that period and then pass the January when it's all settled in, it'll enable you to travel more because I just, I just can't pin you down in any way once I get past January. (K "yes"). It's almost as though you're not here (K "Right"). I mean I hope to God you are like, but I mean it's like (K laughs) but it's like, it's as though you could be going from here to there, to there, cos it's travel (K "right") and traveling (K "yes"). Now that means travel is in the country and traveling is outside—it's just my way of deciphering it (K "right"). But the only thing you just need to watch a little bit through this month and next month, so we're talking November and December, are sort of nerve conditions, because you've been very sort of electric since about the spring (K "absolutely"). And I do feel that this has been slightly interconnected with romantic conditions (K "Absolutely") and it's got (Christian here makes some strange noises with his lips) and you've, you've, you've...I don't know what you've done. I think you just must have blocked it out to be honest (K "yes") but don't worry about that, because I think if you just follow your good feeling, do the career, the work change, let the move sift into place, and then you'll find that romantic things sort of follow along as you progress through 1988. But it is really a good idea. Has it already been discussed verbally or mentally to go abroad?*

Karen: *Oh, well I'm actually planning to go away quite soon.*

Dion: *Abroad?*

Karen: *Yes.*

Dion: *Oh, that's alright. And this is to like follow career opportunities?*

Karen: *Yes, both. Yes.*

Dion: *Yes, I mean you can go to sort of, bum around for a while, but I just feel as though it's, at the end of it there's some career thing, and I think if you didn't go..let's put it this way, I think if you didn't go I think you'd kick yourself when you were sixty.*

Karen: Yes.
Dion: Okay?
Karen: Yes.
Dion: My pleasure.
Karen: Oh, Christian, one last thing. Can I just ask you more about the relationship?
Dion: Hmm.
Karen: Um...I'm just not sure what to do about it right now.
Dion: Ah, well. That's why I answered it in the wrapped up way (K "yes"). Take the career, go for the move, and it will fall itself into place.
Karen: Right, Okay.
Dion: In a nutshell (Here Christian makes a rasping sound).

Mr. X

One segment of the 1990 British documentary *Superpowers* dealt with Christian Dion and my analysis of Dion's readings. Essentially, I commented that while each of Dion's readings appeared to be different, they all followed the same underlying script. I said to the camera that I could probably write a computer program to do what Dion does. On this basis, the director assumed that I was claiming to be able to do what Christian Dion does. He arranged for a radio station in Buffalo, New York to have me do readings for listeners during a two-hour call-in show.

I had some misgivings. I had never done readings for callers to a radio program. Unlike face-to-face readings, I would not be able to rely upon the typical clues of dress, jewelry, posture, physical health, and the many others. Nor could I get the feedback from body language and facial expressions that I find so useful in typical readings. I also lacked the huge amount of practice that Dion had accumulated from hundreds of hours of doing his thing on the radio.

For these reasons, I was apprehensive about how successful I would be. On the other hand, this was an opportunity to show that just about anyone could succeed at this task. Anyway, the die was cast. I had to go through with it. Fortunately, everything worked out to perfection. All the `clients' evaluated my readings as extremely accurate. I appeared, for this purpose, on a call-in talk show hosted by Paul Lisle. For obvious reasons, I was not introduced either by my own name or as a skeptic [although part way into the program, Mr. Lisle happened to mention that I was connected with CSICOP. Fortunately, the subsequent callers did not know what CSICOP stands for.]

Lisle introduced me as Mr. X. Lisle stated that, "Mr X is a gentleman who has a long history of having the ability to read personalities, to read Tarot cards and to be a gentleman who is world renowned as a psychic with great psychic abilities and during this hour and the next hour we're going to ask you, the listening audience, to call in and to give your name, and, well, Mr X,

what information do you require? Do you require their date of birth. Do you require that they tell you anything about themselves... (I said 'no')." Both Lisle and I also requested the callers and the listeners to remain listening because we would make an important announcement at the end of the program. [This is when I planned to debrief the listeners by letting them know that I was a skeptic and the apparent success of the readings had nothing to do with the paranormal or the occult.]

During the workshop I will play a few of the readings that I did and also discuss both how I prepared for them and the underlying strategy in what I said. Here, I present the transcript of my first reading:

*Lisle: Why don't we go directly to the phone and let's start in...with Julie.
Good morning, Julie.*

Julie: Good morning.

Mr. X: Julie?

Julie: Yes.

Mr. X: How are you?

Julie: Fine, thank you. And you?

Mr. X: Good. You sound very chipper and very happy. So I see right away that even though you sound chipper and very happy that in the recent past there have been feelings of restriction and limitation. You're becoming aware that you've lived through a period where you've tried to do things as you should, as defined by society, by your friends, your relatives. And now there's new opportunities opening up. I see that there's a brand new sense of direction. That's already happened. In other words, you've already begun to think of a new opportunity. It's there for you and it's coming at the right time because you're ripe. The time is ripe right now for you to be dealing with new challenges, but, however, there are problems with this challenge because there is fear as you're leaving the security of what you've already done and the world you move into. There is, there's this trade-off between the fear of leaving that kind of a world and the uncertainty of doing something new. Now I can't tell, I can't make any decisions for you. It's not my business to advise you, but I think you already know what you have to do in order to do the right thing. Is that a baby we hear in the background?

Julie: Yes.

Mr. X: Okay. Now as you grow, as people grow it's like an analogy I've heard before, which I borrowed for tonight. It's like a lobster that when they grow to a new stage they have to shed their outer skeleton. And shedding this outer layer, there's a period of uncertainty, of vulnerability and this is the problem you face. I also see that you've had recently some daydreams, only just really fantasy daydream type of thing where you-- you've even thought of maybe running away once in a while and maybe starting life anew with a new relationship and so on. But that's just

because of this problem of . . . as you begin to think of the youth that's now slipping by and facing the future. Now travel opportunities also I see have, there is opportunity to go overseas. I think soon. I see this coming up. It maybe already have come...come into play. The one thing I see that's happening with you is, it's even like a moment of terror where you begin to think and it's almost subconscious at the moment of the fact that you now achieve most of the goals and things that you thought of life was like when you were younger. And now you're wondering what goes on from here. And there's a big long period left and you have to think about what you're going to do in this remaining period. And so my feeling is that you must re-assess, which involves dissembling, taking apart what you were and putting together something new. I think we can leave it at that at this point in time.

Lisle: How, how's he doing, Julie?

Julie: Well, as a matter of fact he's doing remarkably well--with one, I, I don't know if it's really relevant or not. The opportunity is, is really, it's for me but indirectly. It really is more related to my husband.

Lisle: Well that, I mean, but you're a family. I mean it certainly relates...

Julie: Exactly. That's why...

Lisle: ...to him it relates to you and that little rugrat I hear in the background.

Julie: I mean both of them, right. Can I, I don't know if this is what he can do or not but can he anticipate whether this opportunity will work out?

Lisle: What do you think, Mr. X?

Mr. X: Well, you know, this is very hard to because it's very hard to anticipate anything . . .

Julie: Sure.

Mr. X: ...but the, it'll work out. Yes, it definitely will out if, in other words it's a matter of how it's handled. If, how it's coped with, how its faced. If, if one goes into the opportunity and, and, and, with reservations and is, leaves, you know, has wonders and keeps asking themselves, "Oh, did I do the right thing.."

Julie: O.K.

Mr. X: ... and so on, if you go into it knowing that this is right--and once you've made that step, you gotta make it right, then it will...I see it coming out very nicely.

Julie: Oh good. Then that, that part of it's taken care. Well it was remarkably accurate. I compliment you on that.

Meaning, Atmosphere, Mood, & Ambience

The client is more apt to be impressed with the reading if it occurs in a context that allows for the possibility of mystery and occult knowledge. This does not mean that the client has to be

gullible or a true believer. But, just like in a game or attending a play, the experience is enhanced if, during the reading, the client (and the reader) can temporarily suspend disbelief or skepticism. If you baldly tell the client that you do not believe in fortune-telling and that it is all hogwash, and then try to do the reading, you should not be surprised if the client finds your reading less than impressive. You don't have to do the opposite and insist that it is real and that you are believer. Rather, treat it in the same way that a magician or conjurer performs. The spectators know that there is a trick to the illusions, but their enjoyment of the show would be greatly diminished if the magician openly reminded the audience, before and during each illusion, that it is only a trick. The show is enjoyed most when the spectators can suspend disbelief--at least for the duration of the show.

Creating an appropriate context and mood does not mean that you should go to extremes. You do not need to dress in magical robes or wear amulets. Some props and romantic play-acting will work fine as long as you do not overdo it.

SECRET #3: A touch of mystery or romance can greatly enhance the effectiveness of your reading. This seasoning can be in the form of some special prop that you use such as a pendulum or a special deck of Tarot cards. You can convey it in the words and images that you use as well as how you play your role. It can involve a personal touch such as always doing your reading for a client by borrowing and holding a piece of the client's jewelry [highly recommended]. As with any seasoning, just a dash will do. Overdoing it will spoil the effect and will turn the reading into a farce.

Exercise: You Do A Reading

The way to learn how to do effective readings is to do them. You should not expect to sit through an two-hour workshop and emerge as a fluent, effective reader. This would be analogous to sitting through a demonstration of golf and expecting to immediately play golf like a pro. Golf is something you learn to do through practice. The same is true of cold reading. Fortunately, cold reading is much simpler to learn than golf. This is because you already possess much of the skill you need for doing a reading. What you learn from doing a reading is how to have confidence in using skills that you already possess.

SECRET #4: The way to become a good cold reader is to do readings. The more you do, the better you will be. Even without the benefits of the secrets and tips from this workshop, if you just try doing readings, you will get better and better and your clients will praise your powers

The Systematic Scan

. For this exercise you may find it helpful to use a pen and notepad. I will pair each participant with another participant. The exercises will involve *observing* your partner. I will have you do this in a systematic fashion. Start with the hair. What does your partner's hairstyle tell you? Is it neat? Unkempt? Is it long or short? Is it stylish or not? Make a few notes on your notepad about your partner's hair. If it suggests tidiness, write the word "tidy." If the hair is obviously colored, make a note of this. Put down any descriptors that come to you about what sort of person would color his or her hair (someone who obviously is concerned about appearing more youthful than he or she is). Next look at the face: the eyes; the skin, etc. Look for acne scars. Makeup. Beard. Etc. I will have you systematically go through each item that can be observed: hair, face, clothes, jewelry, shoes, posture, physical build, weight, height, etc. I will also discuss ways of probing for more information--both indirect and direct. By the end of this exercise, you will have accumulated a number of observations that can form the basis of an effective reading.

Key Descriptors

In a followup exercise, I will have you generate some key descriptors of your partner based on rudimentary indicators from the classic divination systems. I will ask you to categorize your partner by body type. Such a classification will enable you to list some additional descriptors of your partner. For example, if you classify your partner as a Mesomorph (muscular, squarish physique) you would list descriptors such as Active, Outgoing, Ambitious, etc. You will do the same with a few facial features such as large or small eyes; large or small nose; high or low forehead; etc. Each of these categorizations, in turn, will generate further descriptors. You can do the same with a few of the lines from the palm. The colors used in the clothing as well as a sample of their handwriting will generate further descriptors. Finally, you will also add a few descriptors based on the partner's sun sign.

Yes, this second set of descriptors is based on invalid systems. They will 'work', however, for two reasons. One is the fact that, if you set your client up properly, the client will find a way to interpret the descriptors to match his or her personality. The second reason is that many clients are familiar with these divination systems and will accept as true what their sun sign is supposed to mean, etc. This could be part of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

By the time your observations have gone this far, you will be surprised at how much information you have to use in your reading. The complete reading can be based on just this information gleaned from your systematic observations of the client.

SECRET #5: You can do your entire reading just from information you gather from preliminary observations of the client. You will find it most effective to master a systematic procedure for making your observations: e.g., start with the hair, then the face, the body build and shape, the posture, the clothing, the shoes, general health, voice and vocabulary, how client shakes hands and makes eye-contact, etc. As a beginner, you will find it helpful to carry a checklist and use it to record preliminary descriptors for each observational detail. You can practice your checklist by covertly trying it out on people you see at the mall or other places.

An exercise to try on your own is to organize the information gained from your observations into a structured script. In this script, you create a story in which your client is the protagonist. In my paper *The Psychic Reading* I described the psychic reader as similar to a ghost writer--the kind of writer who writes the 'autobiography' of a celebrity. Essentially, the reader gathers information that the client unwittingly supplies during the reading. The reader repackages this information into a coherent story involving the past, the present and the future.

One script you can use would contain the following acts: 1) The Current Concerns of the Client; 2) The Past Events Leading up to the Current Concerns; 3) The Present Situation and Blocks to Solving the Problems; 4) The Near Future; 5) The Long-Range Picture. You fill out this script with information you have gleaned from your observations as well as actuarial information relevant to individuals who belong to the same age, gender, and socio-economic level as your client. For Act 1: Current Concerns, ask yourself what sorts of problems would a person of this age, gender, physical appearance, and socio-economic level be facing--especially in his or her current environment? You can make some reasonable guesses just using general knowledge about individuals in the same category as your client. By watching the client for clues as you begin briefly describing possible problem areas, you can usually narrow the concerns down to one or two that are uppermost in the client's mind.

For Act 2, you try to make some plausible inferences of the factors in the client's past that have lead up to the present problems. Mention acquaintances and other people who might have contributed to the present situation. Act 3 is important because it helps validate your occult knowledge for the client. Here you tell the client why he or she is having difficulty solving the problem. You can mention how valuable it might be to reformulate the problem; to stand back and put it into proper perspective; to ask how important the present difficulties will be ten or 20 years from now. Always emphasize that it is what the client does *today* that will determine the future. This requires the client to get organized, to assign priorities, and to focus current efforts on the items with top priority. Act 4 deals with the near future in terms of the coming year. A good strategy, suggested by Ron Martin, is to divide the year into the four seasons. If you are giving the reading in the Summer, your forecasts for the Fall can build upon events that typically happen in the Fall--the return to school, the new Television Season, the return from Vacation, the loss of leaves, etc. Your predictions for the Winter season can take into account the holiday season, the gloom of the shortened days, etc. Act 5 deals with the long-range future and it is here you will

want to offer hope and possibilities for resolving problems and achieving success. To be credible you should emphasize that the success you see can occur only if the client gets his or her act together and takes the necessary steps to bring the promising future into reality.

SECRET #6: Repackage your observational details into a script. A good script to use, especially for beginners, is one that deals with the following acts: 1) The Client's Concerns; 2) The Client's Past: incidents and people who have contributed to the present situation; 3) The Present Situation including individuals and Personal Habits that Impede Problem Resolution; 4) The Immediate Future (covering the coming year; 5) The Long-Range Future.

Preparation for Becoming a Reader

I have already discussed some of what I will talk about in this section. However, repetition will not hurt. Here I discuss how you can prepare to become an effective reader.

QUESTION YOURSELF

Before you undertake seriously to become a reader, you should ask yourself some important questions. Try to answer them honestly. Here is a suggested list:

1. Why do you want to learn to do readings?

Presumably you do not want to become a professional psychic. At least I hope not. Perhaps you have good motives. You may want to learn how to give convincing readings so that you can educate the public about why psychic readings appear to 'work.' If this is your goal, it is a noble one, but you should proceed with caution. I have seen attempts to achieve this goal backfire. The demonstrator would pretend to be a psychic. After giving some readings, the demonstrator would then announce he or she was a fake. It is difficult to carry out such a plan without appearing to setting oneself up as superior to the audience. Often the audiences have felt exploited and insulted. You should give much care and thought to how you will use your reading abilities to impress and then disabuse your audiences.

I read palms on the *NOVA* program that featured the psychic investigations of Randi. To insure getting a good reading, the producers had me read the palms of seven strangers. After each reading, the clients evaluated my performance in my absence. All of them rated it highly. After each client had made an evaluation, he or she returned into my presence and my task was to debrief the client--that is, I had to explain to that person that what I had told him or her was not

based on the lines in the hands. Rather, it consisted of some guesswork along with obvious inferences based upon the way the person was dressed and the way he or she responded to the reading. After this debriefing, I had to persuade the person to sign a release so that we could show the reading on television.

I knew before I did the readings that I had to debrief the clients and then gain their consent to allow the producers to show the reading. I agonized over this because of the possible humiliation this could create for the clients and because they might reasonably refuse to allow us to show the reading. After all, from the clients' viewpoints, I had just victimized them. I had a few days to think about this before I did the readings.

When it was time to debrief the clients, I carefully explained that I used to do palm readings for money and that I used to believe in it. I then told them how I learned that not only were my clients falsely convinced that the readings were valid, but so was I. I explained how the reading succeeds because the client uses her intelligence and creativity to make sense of the otherwise disconnected and general statements that the reader utters. In addition, as the reading proceeds, the reader gains feedback--either wittingly or unwittingly--from the client's reactions and is able to tailor the reading more specifically to the client's actual situation. I tried hard to convey to the client that the success of the reading did not reflect badly on the intelligence of the client. Indeed, the readings cannot succeed with rigid, unimaginative, and unintelligent clients.

To my relief, the clients readily accepted my explanation and none showed any signs of resentment or embarrassment. All readily signed the consent statement and expressed eagerness to see themselves on television. The outcome was not so clear-cut on my most recent venture. I did two readings--one a palm reading and the other a straight cold reading-- for two ladies who had been selected by the television producers. The readings went especially well and both clients declared that my reading had been 100% accurate! I then went through the debriefing, which will also be included on the program, with each client. In this case, I debriefed both clients at the same time. They listened politely and acknowledged that what I had to say about picking up clues and making educated guesses made sense. However, they then both agreed that my explanation could not account for the facts that I had included in my readings of them. They insisted that I was too accurate to dismiss the results as entirely due to cold reading. Something more must have been involved! In this latter situation, I am not sure that I succeeded in convincing these clients that I was not a true psychic!

2. In What Context and Setting Will I Be Doing the Readings?

Will you be doing the readings as part of a public lecture or demonstration? Or will you be doing them on a one-to-one basis such as at a psychic fair or in your office? Will the audience be aware that you are a skeptic before you do the reading? Or will you debrief them only after you have demonstrated your ability to give successful readings? The context and setting of psychic readings vary greatly. Some are short readings given at parties, or other public forums. Some are given on television shows or to callers on radio programs. Others are given over the phone--many

through costly 900 exchanges in the United States. The public readings are often as much a form of entertainment as they are an attempt to cope with serious problems confronting the client. They require a different strategy than the more traditional readings in which the psychic deals privately with the client. These latter readings typically last 30 minutes to an hour and are more like psychotherapy or counseling. Clients in these private encounters are desperate people with serious problems. They also pay a high price for these services. Many readers do much of their work through the mails. These various settings and formats involve different concerns and strategies. For example, some cold readers use essentially the same stock spiel with all their clients. This can work, of course, as long as the readings are private and the clients do not know one another. The reader has to be quite skilled and resourceful to stretch the reading into an hour. Good readers actually go beyond this because they depend on getting their clients to come back for repeated readings.

I suspect that the participants in this workshop, for the most part, will be giving short readings in a public forum. Short readings are much easier to do, but the public forum requires that you give a different reading to each client. This is easier than it seems, but it means that you cannot rely on stock spiels or a short list of memorized clichés.

3. What Do I Want to Accomplish?

This is related to the first question. Are you trying to impress your audience with how clever you are? Are you trying to convince them that they are gullible? Are you trying to educate them in such a way that they will learn something about how their minds work?

4. Who Will Be Your Clients?

Are they fellow skeptics? If so, have you considered the difficulties you might encounter in trying to get them to accept your reading? Are they true believers? If so, have you considered the various issues involving making them feel exploited? Are they a mixed group of lay people?

5. How Will I Present Myself?

Will you present yourself as a true believer? An accomplished psychic reader? A skeptic? Or what?

6. How Important Is This? How Much Time and Effort Am I Willing to Devote to It?

You can learn to do outstanding readings. But it will require time and effort. Will the result be worth it? How often will you be able to demonstrate your reading ability? Can you better use your time and effort for some other projects?

7. How Do I Overcome the Handicap of Being A Skeptic?

The shut-eye has a big advantage over the skeptic in doing a cold reading. Since the shut-eye believes in what she is doing, she has little trouble in conveying this belief to the client. This makes the reading more credible. However, if you are introduced as a skeptic, or if the client already knows that you are skeptic, you will obviously have a more difficult task in making your reading effective. One strategy that has worked for me is to admit that I do not believe in palmistry (or whatever procedure I am using for the reading). However, I tell the client that I am doing the reading according to the accepted rules of palmistry. Often, I produce a palmistry book and consult it occasionally to reinforce the idea that the doing reading in accord with acknowledged principles.

LEARN A DIVINATION SYSTEM

I have already discussed this. Using such a system lends credibility and mystery to your reading. Palm reading provides the opportunity for physical contact with the client. Such contact adds to the intimacy of the procedure but, more importantly, it provides the reader with feedback because clients will unwittingly signal agreement or disagreement with what you are saying through tensing or moving their hands. Many clients reveal emotional reactions through sweating of their hands. Whatever system you use, it can provide a scapegoat for apparent misses. If the client questions something you have said, you can tell him or her that the standard interpretation of that line or card, for example, is what you used. Other interpretations are possible. You can also point out that the particular statement has to be qualified by other indicators.

Most systems `work' because the clients usually find ways to match what you say to their self-perceptions. The systems also generate many separate descriptors which often contradict one another. The attempt to assimilate the total reading results in selectively emphasizing those items that fit as well as re-interpreting those items that at first seemed mistaken. For example, I recently told a client that his well-developed finger of Apollo showed a love of art. I could tell from his reaction that he did not agree. So I pointed to his headline and told him that this indicated that he channeled his interests in practical and productive pursuits. Thus, any artistic interest would be devoted towards designing and producing practical and material products. He was quite impressed with this because he was an engineer.

PRACTICE ON PHOTOGRAPHS AND (COVERTLY) ON PEOPLE PRACTICE ON FRIENDS AND PEOPLE AT PARTIES

By practicing on photographs, as well as on people you observe in public places, you will quickly gain fluency. You will also sharpen your observational strategies. The one limitation of such practice is that you get no feedback from the clients. Aafter you have gained some practice with these covert readings, you should move on to interactive readings with people. Begin with friends and strangers you meet at parties. You can inform them that you are just beginning and

want to practice your skills. Just about everyone will be happy to comply. What you are looking for in this stage is feedback from the clients. Ask them to evaluate the reading. Ask them to tell you what impressed them as well as suggest ways you might improve.

DEVISE OBSERVATIONAL CHECKLISTS ALONG WITH DESCRIPTORS

I have already discussed this point as well. Make a checklist of each feature you observe and the order in which you will consider it. For example, HAIR (Neat/ unkempt) could be an early entry. For Neat hair you could list one or two descriptors such as TIDY, ATTENTION TO DETAILS. The next item could be HAIR (Stylish/Out of Style). Again you could list one or two descriptors to go with each. You will find it easier than you think to generate a substantial list of indicators and associated descriptors. Most of this list you can generate without any special knowledge or expertise. For example, if someone is dressed casually as contrasted with someone who is dressed formally, this gives you obvious clues about how they wish to present themselves.

Many items on your list will not apply to every client. Some may not have hair. For many items, your client does not depart from the average. What you are looking for in your preliminary and systematic observational scan are those attributes that stand out--that most depart from the ordinary. You may decide that there is nothing special about your client's clothing except that the shoes are inconsistent with the other parts of the clothing. The client, for example, might be wearing a standard business suit but with shoes that are casual and informal. Note this inconsistency and use it to say something about the kind of person before you.

After doing a reading, review your checklist. Note items that you overlooked. You may want to add or change items. Eventually you will develop your own observational system and with practice it will become internalized and automatic. You will be able to quickly size up a given client and be ready with several appropriate descriptors.

LEARN A SMALL LIST OF DESCRIPTORS BASED ON:

BODY TYPES; FACE READING; SUN SIGNS; PALMISTRY; YOUR QUICK CATEGORIZATIONS OF CLIENT AS WELL-GROOMED, EXTROVERTED OR INTROVERTED, LOOSE OR TIGHT; HANDWRITING.

Do not worry whether these latter descriptors are valid. What matters is that they give you several more descriptors to add to those you obtained from your initial observations based on their grooming, posture, dress, and mannerisms. The combination of these two sets of descriptors will provide you with more than enough material to create your preliminary reading. Another bonus is that your reading for each client will be unique. Your readings will be far superior to those that depend upon a limited number of memorized stock phrases.

PRACTICE WRITING OUT CHARACTER SKETCHES BASED ON YOUR DESCRIPTORS

When you are still learning to be a reader, you will benefit enormously if, after listing the descriptors you obtained from your observational scan, you then write out a script for that client using the descriptors to fill in your general script. After you have written several scripts, you will no longer need to write them down. You will find that you can spontaneously weave your observational results into a coherent reading for your client.

READ BOOKS ON:

Pop psychology, divination, and self-help. From the perspective of the scientist and the academic psychologists most of these books are filled with nonsense. Such nonsense, however, provides the reader with great material. Much of this 'nonsense' is part of the folklore of the counterculture. Your clients will have absorbed much of this material and the words and images from these books will resonate with them. You will also find it worthwhile to read parts of introductory psychology textbooks, books on cold reading (when you can gain access to them), and books on criminology (for good tips on gathering advance information about your clients).

OBSERVE PSYCHIC READERS IN ACTION

You can learn much by watching both the readers and their clients in action. Talk to the clients after a reading to find out what impressed them. You can pick up many good phrases and lines by listening to good readers. You, especially as a skeptic, will not be impressed with many of the readers. Most of them will strike you as crude and obvious. However, their clients often think differently. What you are trying to find out is what about the readings--even ones that are bad from your perspective--impress the clients.

PRACTICE DOING READINGS

This piece of advice should be obvious by now.

GET FEEDBACK

Especially while you are in the learning stage, have your client evaluate your reading. Both your client and you will naturally be interested in those parts of the reading that 'worked.' However, during your learning period, you also want to find out what parts of your reading did not 'work.'

The Procedure

Okay. You have done your reading and you have properly prepared yourself. You have devised and internalized an observational checklist, you have practiced on pictures and people, and you stand ready to impress the world with your psychic insights. So, let us put it all together in the form of a systematic routine or procedure. The following procedure assumes that you will be giving short readings--10 or 15 minutes in length-- to clients who come to your booth--say at a psychic fair--for a one-on-one reading. You can easily adapt the procedure to other formats such as the one where you give a short reading--5 minutes or so--to each of several individuals in a public forum.

GENERAL PREPARATION

I am using the term *preparation* as the first step in the procedure to determine the setting, format, context, and other aspects of your reading. For whom are you doing the readings? In what kind of forum? How many readings will you be doing? How long will each one be? How will you be introduced to the clients? How will the clients be chosen [volunteers, selected by host, selected by you, etc.]? Once you have determined the setting and circumstances of your reading, then decide on the general script you will use--a cradle-to-grave reading; a reading that briefly touches upon the past, present and future; a reading that attempts to focus on the client's one overriding concern, etc. Decide on the range of topics you will try to cover in each reading--e.g., Money Matters, Career, Relationships, Spiritual Development, Family, Travel, or Health. Some readers try to briefly touch upon all of the major categories in a single reading. Others, such as Christian Dion, rotate through small subsets of the categories for each client--in this way the reader insures that each client will get a different reading. Decide on the props you will use such as psychometry, palmistry, face reading, or whatever. Also decide on how you will dress and present yourself. What role will you play? Opinions vary on how you should dress and comport yourself. Some advise that you dress better than your clients and that you conduct yourself as if you come from a better background than they do. Others advise that you take care to show that you are human and are like your clients in every way except for the fact that you have become proficient in occult arts.

SETTING THE STAGE

This step blends in with the preceding step. Setting the stage involves the arrangement of the physical context of the reading. It includes the way you dress and the props you will use. If the reading will take place in your office or booth, the setting includes the furniture, floor and wall decorations, background music, incense and candles, and the arrangement of client in relation to reader (side by side, opposite each other, etc.). If the reading is in a public forum, the setting can involve the physical arrangement of the platform, whether the client remains in the audience or is ushered onto the stage, etc.

Although you do not have much control over the setting in a public forum, you still can do

some stage setting. Some readers will bring their own small tables or table coverings. You can display posters on easels or taped to the walls. You can use slides or overheads to show drawings, say of a palm, as you read the palm of a client.

An important part of setting the stage is to *define the situation*. When clients come to you for a reading, they are leaving their everyday world and venturing into unknown territory--your world. Make the most of it. Let them know, in subtle ways, that this is *your* turf. In this situation, you, the reader, set the ground rules. Again, this is not as obvious in a public forum. However, you still can define the situation by explaining how you operate and what the audience and clients must do to enable your demonstration to succeed. In this context how the host introduces you to the audience is important. Take pains to write out exactly what you want your host or introducer to say--and not say!--about who you are and what you do.

Setting the stage is important in determining the mood, expectations, and, ultimately, the impact of your readings.

SECRET #7: The success of your reading depends as much, if not more, on what you do *before* the reading than on what you do during the reading. Setting the stage and setting up the client are critical in creating an appropriate ambiance and in gaining the cooperation of the client during the reading. If you can achieve these two goals, the reading will take care of itself.

SIZING UP THE CLIENT

Here is where you apply your systematic observational scan. The best time to size up your client is before the actual reading. The reason for this is that during the reading you will be occupied with other matters--such as formulating and revising your statements, watching for feedback clues, etc. You do much of your sizing up during the greeting phase. How does your client enter the situation? Does he or she shake hands firmly, limply, etc. During the preliminary chitchat, in addition to doing your systematic observational scan, you look for obvious clues from the forcefulness and openness of the client's speech, etc.

During this greeting phase, you can ask your client if she or he has had previous readings. How many? How did they come out? A client who has had many readings is obviously a true believer--at least someone who is willing to listen to psychic readers.

SETTING UP THE CLIENT

Here is where you prepare the client for the reading. This is another opportunity for you to define the situation. You let the client know how you operate and what to expect. In subtle, and

not so subtle, ways you instruct the client in how to play his or her role. If you set the client up properly, the client should realize that "it takes two to tango"--that the success of the reading depends as much upon his or her contribution as it does upon the psychic. In fact, this is nothing but the truth! The client makes sense of what you say. It is the client who finds the deep meaning and hidden significance in your utterances. If you have set the client up properly, he or she will work hard to make the reading succeed. The onus of a failed reading will fall upon the client.

Many clients will be apprehensive about the forthcoming reading. You should try to put them at ease. Try to develop a rapport with the client. Try to make the client, not yourself, the center of attention and interest. Not only do you want your client cooperating to make the reading succeed, but you want your client to like you and enjoy the reading. I sometimes use a ploy borrowed from confidence games. I explain that each of us, the client and me, have access to a partial viewpoint. The client has access to his or her own concerns from an internal and subjective perspective. I, as the reader, have access to certain specialized knowledge as well as an objective, outside view of the client and his or her problems. Neither of us, alone, has the complete picture. However, by pooling our resources, by acting together, we can get a total perspective and possibly gain important new and helpful insights.

This is also a good time to inform the client about what you can and cannot accomplish with a reading. You especially want to warn the client that you cannot give medical or legal advice. One reader has written that he often tells his clients that he has made an agreement with the doctors and lawyers. He will not give medical or legal advice if they refrain from reading the Tarot cards. On medical issues, you should advise them to check with their doctors and to make sure to have regular checkups.

In as many ways as you can, try to make the client *an active participant* in the reading and to become as personally identified or involved with it as possible. This could involve simple touches such as borrowing a piece of jewelry or other personal possession to hold as you do the reading. Some readers bring a pendulum and show the client how it works. At some point during the reading, you can have the client try to answer a personal question by using the pendulum (this is very effective). Another procedure is to have the client rest her hand upon yours during the reading. This personal contact adds to the client's involvement but it also provides a useful source of feedback because you often will sense subtle physical changes through this contact when the client is reacting to what you are saying. Another way to increase the client's involvement is to tell him or her what certain cards or lines traditionally signify and ask: "How does this apply to your situation." In effect, you are presenting them with the traditional interpretations and requiring them to coordinate and translate these interpretations into their own situation. If you are doing a Tarot reading, you can have them shuffle the cards several times during the reading, making sure to emphasize that they have to impart their personal vibrations upon the cards and the subsequent deal. In fact, you can also have them deal the cards as you show them where to place each card.

SECRET #8: The more you can involve the client in the reading the greater will be its success. If you can make the client an active participant in the reading, success is virtually guaranteed.

THE PRELIMINARY SCRIPT

For many readings, especially brief, public ones, the preliminary script, by itself, will provide a sufficient reading. For other readings, however, formulating and delivering a preliminary script is a way to probe for feedback from the client and to refine and customize the final product so that it truly is an accurate picture of the client and his or her concerns. As I have previously discussed, you formulate the preliminary script on the basis of your observational scan and your general script--e.g., present concerns, past conditions leading up to these concerns, present circumstances and blocks to coping, immediate future, long-range future. As you work your way through this script you should also try to touch briefly upon the standard problem categories such as money, career, relationships, etc. From the client's reactions, you often will quickly determine which of these areas are of most concern to the client. You can then focus the rest of your reading upon that concern.

You can structure your script as a story with a plot. Your client is facing a crisis or circumstances that are less than optimal. Certain individuals as well as personal habits have contributed to this situation. However, you see potential for resolving or improving circumstances provided the client makes certain adjustments in his or her life or life style. You emphasize that the only way to improve future prospects is to do things now, in the present. You also look at the long-range future and see great prospects--but realistic ones--for a satisfying and rewarding life.

SECRET #9: Your reading should always foresee a successful and rewarding future. Do not go overboard. Keep the success to modest and realistic proportions. Talk about *potentials* rather than actual outcomes. Emphasize that the client's future has great potential *provided* he or she takes appropriate steps and develops and maintains proper habits--dietary, exercise, balance, etc. Tell them that they should read self-help books on getting organized; that they should learn to set priorities; and that they should focus their limited time and resources upon those things that truly matter in the long run.

The Delivery

THE OPENING PROBE(S)

Now that you have taken care of the preliminaries, you are finally ready to put what you

have learned into action. You are ready to deliver the reading. I have already covered just about everything you need to know about delivering the reading. You can begin by using your preliminary script to probe for client reactions. Another kind of opening probe, the kind that I used to give readings on the radio, is to throw out a wide-ranging, double-barreled statement. I got this idea from listening to several tapes of Christian Dion in action. The schema for my opening probe goes as follows:

I get the impression that you--or someone close to you--has done--or is considering doing [X].

A moments reflection reveals what a broad net I have cast. "You--or someone close to you" covers many possibilities. "Has done-or is considering doing" not only can apply to an action already taken but can also apply to an action that someone is considering, but is still unknown to the client. I vary the topic for X with each new client. For one client, X might be "an important career change." For the next client, "entering an important deal involving a property matter." For a third client X could be "changing or entering a new relationship."

Here is an example of how I used such a probe when I was playing the role of Mr. X. The caller was a woman whose voice suggested she was beyond middle age and somewhat depressed [Surprisingly, I found I was picking up many useful cues just from the way the caller responded to my opening greeting.]. I immediately launched into my probe. *I get the impression that you--or someone close to you--has made--or is considering making--an important career change.* She immediately replied, "That's my son!" I now had a solid basis for customizing the reading. I knew that her son had just made an important career change. I correctly guessed that she had some reservations about the wisdom of that move. I was able to get her to agree that it was too late to go back to his original position and that the wisest course of action on her part was to help him succeed in his new career.

Another useful opening probe that also fits with your underlying script is one that Christian Dion uses a lot. The schema is as follows:

Going back [Here he specifies a period of a few months or a few years], *I get the impression that things have not been going as well as you would have liked.* [Dion phrases this in a variety of ways. Sometimes he says *I see you have been going through a bad patch.* Other times he might say, *I get the feeling that you have been in a dither or not quite satisfied with the way things have been going.*] *However, do not despair! I see matters improving by* [here Dion specifies a rough target date in the near future such as by next Christmas, or by next Spring, etc.], *especially if you give yourself a good kick in the seat of the pants and get yourself organized.*

OBSERVE, OBSERVE, OBSERVE

To be a good cold reader, you must continually adjust and refine your statements in

response to reactions from your client. You are looking for clues--any sudden changes in posture, breathing, facial expression, head movements, body language--from your client. On the extremely rare occasion when you encounter a client who fails to provide feedback from any of these channels, you are dealing with someone who is consciously trying to avoid providing you with any clues. This in itself is a strong clue! You could tell the client that you get the impression that this is a person who has a strong need to hide their inner feelings and thoughts. That they do not like to reveal themselves readily to others. That they have doubts or skepticism about your abilities, etc.

In your search for feedback, do not stare at the client. This could make him or her uncomfortable and also put the client on guard against revealing him or herself. Focus, instead, on the cards, if you are doing a card reading, or on the palm if you are reading palms. Sometimes you can close your eyes. This is effective when you are holding an object of theirs in your hand. Also if you have physical contact, either through holding their hands, or by having them rest one hand on yours during the reading, you have no need to look directly at them. When your eyes are open look at their feet or off to the side. You can detect subtle changes in body position and head movements in your peripheral vision. Indeed, your peripheral vision is much more sensitive to subtle movements than is your direct vision. By not appearing to be looking at them, they will be more off guard and more prone to unwittingly provide useful feedback.

Listen, especially to their breathing. Any sudden departures from the regular pattern of breathing indicate that what you are saying is having an impact. Watch their feet and listen for shifts in seating position. Some readers advise putting the client in a slightly uncomfortable chair or one that squeaks as a way of increasing the possibilities of feedback from sudden changes in seating. If you are in physical contact, learn to focus your attention on that contact. You will find that most clients, even those who otherwise seem to provide no other sorts of feedback, will unwittingly change the pressure of their hand upon yours whenever you are saying something that hits home. This is the basis for contact mind reading.

SECRET #10: The client, not the reader, creates the successful reading. Use feedback from the client to fine tune the reading. Avoid staring at the client. Instead, use peripheral vision, listen for changes in breathing pattern and shifts in seating. Hands and feet are good sources of unwitting clues because clients, even when they want to avoid revealing themselves, typically focus on controlling their facial expressions .

Another way to get feedback during the reading is through direct probes. Ask the client, "Do you understand what I am talking about?" "Is what I just said clear?" Use these probes sparingly. If you overdo it, the client will become aware that you are deliberately fishing for information.

REVISE, REFINE, ELABORATE

By now, you should know what to do here. You revise in the light of the feedback you obtain and you elaborate upon those areas that the client attends to most. Occasionally the client will indicate--either covertly or openly--that something you said is wrong. You can re-interpret your statement in the light of the objection. You may have pointed out, for example, that you see the client as outgoing and highly sociable. The client signals that she does not see herself that way. You can reinterpret what you just said by explaining that although she considers herself to be introverted, she actually is a highly sociable person but one who is very discriminating about who she socializes with. Since most people she encounters are not her type, she avoids people in favor of doing things by herself. However, you see a strong need to find the right sort of person or persons to interact with. Sometimes it is better to admit that you made a mistake rather than to try to re-interpret what you said. After all, you only claim to be 85% accurate--not perfect! [I do not know the reason, but almost every time I ask a client to rate the accuracy of my reading on a scale from 0 to 100 they rate it 85.]

Another way to handle apparently erroneous or inconsistent statements is to let the client resolve the matter. I sometimes say something like, *That is very interesting. This is the first time in my memory that this indicator has been off the mark. Just about everyone I encounter with such a palm is an extrovert. I wonder what has gone wrong here.* Frequently, the client will come up with a possible resolution. For example, she might speculate that although she typically avoids parties, she does like to visit museums and other places where intellectuals congregate. Given just a little encouragement, clients typically will find a way to bail you out! Remember, they *want* you to succeed. They want you to be all knowing and all-powerful. Otherwise, how will you be able to solve their problems?

Still other ways exist to reconcile apparently wrong or inconsistent statements. If the literal meaning of your statement is wrong, rephrase it in a figurative mode. One reader told me she had an impression of me working in my garden. I told her I did not have a garden and that I did not like gardening. She asked me what I did for a living. I told her I was a professor. She brightened up: *Of course! What I said was not meant to be taken literally. The flowers and plants represent your students. And my vision of you attending to your garden symbolizes your desire to cultivate your students so that they will grow in knowledge.* In addition to switching from the literal to the figurative, readers often salvage an apparent miss by switching from the past to the future or vice versa. They also can switch the intended target of a statement from the client to an acquaintance of the client's. For example: *I get the impression of a recent voyage-- a long one overseas.* [The client indicates that he has not done any traveling recently]. *If it has not occurred yet, then I feel it will happen soon, sooner than you expect. Be on the lookout for an opportunity to go overseas within the next six months. It will open up new possibilities for you.*

ELABORATE UPON THE CLIENT'S MAJOR AREA OF CONCERN

. Once you have determined the major focus of concern, you should devote much of your reading to it. You can throw in comments about other topics by telling the client that one never knows how other areas affect and interact with the one that happens to be the current center of attention. In very brief public readings, it usually is sufficient to cover briefly all the key areas of possible concern. Then ask the client if you have dealt with what her major concern. Many will simply say, "yes."

Some readers have told me that their clients usually know what they should do but are looking for someone to nudge them towards this goal. These readers believe that once you have found out what concerns the client, you can ask the client what he or she thinks is the appropriate thing to do. If they give a sensible answer, then the reader encourages them to do it. In this scenario, the reader plays the role of a catalyst.

GIVE SOME GENERAL ADVICE FOR ORGANIZING AND IMPROVING COPING

Read self-help books on organizing and managing time and tasks. The pop-psychology books (the one's that make professional psychologists cringe) often have some homey, common-sense advice that might just be of some help to your client. Most clients can benefit from attention to their diets and regular exercise. Those clients who strike you as tense and up tight, could benefit from relaxation techniques and simple meditation for a few minutes each day. Just about everyone can improve efficiency and take control over their lives by learning techniques for scheduling their time and allocating limited resources.

LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN!

In one-to-one readings, more often than you might think, a client will suddenly ask questions or begin talking about a topic you have just touched upon. At this point, stop what you are saying. Give your full attention to the client and show, by eye contact and head nodding, that you are listening. Many people go to psychic readers, and pay hefty fees, just to spend time with someone who sincerely listens to them. For a while they are center stage. Someone is focusing on them and their particular concerns. In some readings, it turns out that the client does more of the talking than the reader. In addition to making the client feel special and important, your listening will provide you much information about the client. Later in that reading, or a subsequent reading, you can repackage the information you gained in this way and feed it back to the client as if your source was your occult channel. Surprisingly, most clients forget that you are simply feeding back to them information that they have already supplied to you. They will give you credit for amazing powers. It helps, when you are listening, to nod and react as if what the client is revealing to you is something you already know.

THE POST MORTEM

When the reading is over, you will find it worthwhile to review it with the client. Especially during your learning stage, you will want the client's evaluation of how well you have done. To get the most out of such evaluations, you have to be honest with yourself and you have to listen carefully for any criticisms or negative comments your client brings up. You might find it valuable to tape record your readings. Later play them back and listen carefully to what you said and think about ways you could have said it better. Repeat this listening of the same reading later. With each replaying you will learn more about how you could have improved upon the reading.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Always keep in mind that the client considers significant whatever you say during the reading. What you say can have a lasting impact. Psychological investigations suggest that this can be so even if you debrief your clients immediately after the reading. So be careful about what you say. Try to leave the client with hope and with possibilities for a better future. Flatter the client, but be realistic. If you exaggerate too much or overdo it, your reading will quickly lose credibility. Keep your reading positive and upbeat but throw in some negatives for credibility. However, temper the negative with a positive twist. For example,; *You need to do a better job of organizing your life and getting your priorities straight. You already know this about yourself. But you need to sit down by yourself and spend a few hours listing your priorities and deciding which ones are truly important. If you do this, and I am sure you both want to do this and are capable of doing it, your potentials for success and happiness are virtually unlimited. But you have to act today rather than putting off this task.*

Debriefing the Client

Debriefing² is the psychologists' term for letting subjects in an experiment know that you have deliberately mislead them for the sake of achieving certain results. This is a very important ethical issue. You have to conduct the debriefing with great care and sensitivity to avoid making the subject feel that he or she has been exploited or made to look like a fool. I assume that, as a good and ethical skeptic, you will want to debrief you clients after you have impressed them with your apparent paranormal powers.

Debriefing poses an ethical dilemma for the skeptic. As I have made it clear, you have to convince your client that you are sincere and possessed of special abilities to create an effective reading--one that will be equivalent to those produced by those who claim to be real psychics. To

² Note that this is not the usual meaning of the term.

achieve this effect, you have to deceive your client. You have to get your client to put his or her trust in you and treat what you are saying as special and personally relevant. The client is particularly vulnerable during a `successful' reading. Immediately after the reading, while the client is still basking in the feeling of having communed with powerful and occult powers, you shock him or her by announcing that the entire reading was a charade. You were not privy to occult powers. You were simply throwing out statements that were universally true of most people and making inferences based on obvious clues supplied by the client. You were playing a trick on the client and the trick worked. The client fell for it.

You, as a skeptic, of course hope that the client and your audience have learned an important lesson. You want them to learn that just because a reading impresses a client, this does not mean that the source of the reading is paranormal or otherwise privileged. In my experience, however, I find that audiences and the `victims' of the skeptic's scam do not absorb the intended lesson. Instead, they remember the skeptic for his or her insensitivity, crude egocentrism, and the flaunting of his or her superiority. Ever since CSICOP was founded in 1976, I have known of several skeptics whose approach to educating the lay public was to pretend to be a psychic, impress the audience with phoney psychic feats, and then tell the audience that they were tricked.

I believe that these skeptics conducted their phoney demonstrations and subsequent disclosures with the best of intentions. However, I keep encountering witnesses to such demonstrations who were embittered by the experience. Many of them walked away with a different lesson than the one intended. They remember the skeptic as a conceited show-off--as someone who seemed to think he was wiser, smarter, and more intelligent than they were. Some find ways to rationalize the experience as evidence *for* rather than *against* the paranormal. The skeptic, they say, with his aggressive and negative attitude, sees everything as a trick. Such negativism prevents the skeptic from experiencing the true spiritual and paranormal dimensions that are open to more sensitive and caring individuals.

I bring up these concerns not to dissuade you from your goals. Rather, I hope that you will consider the problems involved and perhaps discover some more effective--and humane--way of using your knowledge of cold reading to further the skeptical cause. I have previously discussed the way I have tried to cope with the debriefing problem in my television and radio appearances. Perhaps, we can spend some time during the workshop to discuss these matters.

Where Do We Go From Here?

I have covered a lot of ground in this manuscript. I have given you more than enough material to enable you to become an effective cold reader. Indeed, with the material in this syllabus you should be able to provide much more impressive readings than 90% of the psychic readers now practicing. This is because most readers are `shut-eyes'--readers who believe in what they are doing. They do not know how to exploit consciously feedback cues nor are they consciously aware of the secrets listed herein.

Yet, there is much more that can be said about giving effective cold readings. Some of this we will discuss during the workshop. You can find more in my previous two papers on cold reading. The attached references cover writings by several individuals who are practicing cold readers. You may not agree with their ethics, but you will find that they provide many useful ideas for how to make your cold readings more effective.



Figure1: Can you make sense of this picture? If you had trouble finding a recognizable object and then finally recognized the image, try seeing the image as you initially experienced before you realized what it represented.

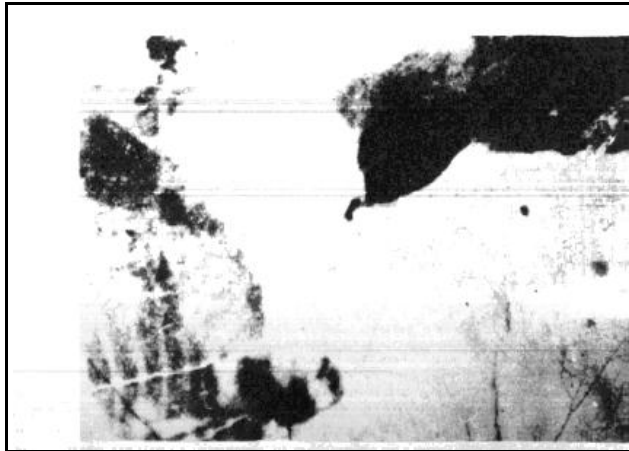


Figure 2: Follow the same instructions as in Figure 1. What lesson do these figures teach us?

Bibliography

The following bibliography is just a partial list of useful books. Many pop psychology books will supply you much useful material in the form of words, personality descriptions, and the like. The books on cold reading are difficult to obtain. Sometimes a local magic dealer can obtain some of them for you. I will give you some addresses where you might be able to obtain some of the books.. People who make their living doing readings have written most of the cold reading books. They make interesting reading just because they represent the opinions of professionals who do readings full time. However, you can improve your readings by reading books on divination, mysticism, psychology, and almost any other book that deals with the human condition.

Please do read the annotations carefully. I have included in some of them information that can add much to your understanding of why 'psychic' readings, although invalid, can appear to be so compelling to otherwise sane and competent individuals.

Anderson, G.B. (1979). *Dynamite mentalism*. Chicago, Ill: Magic, Inc.

Anderson states that "This is a 15-minute one-man routine with no props or gimmicks, an act that can baffle and stun your audiences, because they can't have the faintest idea of how it's done. No questions are written down, nothing is said by the spectator, and yet you answer the question or problem of which he's thinking. You do it without any obvious 'fishing' of any kind. And you do this not with just one person but with as many as ten, as time allows, regardless of the makeup of any particular audience."

Anderson based his routine on some elementary empirical research. He discovered the questions that most concerned males and females in three broad age categories. Young males, for example, were most concerned about whether they should change their jobs, whereas young females were most concerned about how a certain man felt about them. Middle aged men tended to be concerned about outcomes of pending deals and how they should invest their money. Middle-aged females wanted to know whether they were making the right decision. Elderly men were worried about how long they were going to live whereas elderly women wanted to know how many years of their life they would live alone. On the basis of this kind of information, Anderson composed stock readings for each of these six age groups. He suggested that the performer memorize these readings and proceed as follows. "I get the impression that someone in the audience is concerned about an impending business deal." He would ask anyone with this concern to raise his or her hand. Usually several would go up. He would choose one that he felt most fit the reading he was about to deliver and then give the reading. He would continue in this way, until he had given 5 to 10 readings.

How well does this work? I met a professional mentalist who did his entire act using Anderson's approach. At the time I met him he was working at a night club on Cape Cod and he had successfully used this same act, night after night, for an entire summer at the same night club.

Blackmore, S.J. (1983). Divination with Tarot cards: an empirical study. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*, 52, 97-101.

Susan Blackmore conducted three experiments "to try to separate and compare two situations: one in which all the possibilities were available (the 'ordinary' reading) and one in which cues from the subject were excluded (the 'test' reading)." When Susan began these experiments, she had been doing Tarot readings for eight years and believed in their efficacy. Indeed, the results from her first experiment seemed to support the validity of the Tarot readings. As expected, the subjects gave higher ratings to their readings when they were given face-to-face. However, even, in the test readings—where there were no clues available the reader from observations of the client—the subjects still gave higher ratings to their own readings than to control readings. To her credit, Blackmore listened to a few critics who suggested possible biases in her data. She conducted the next two experiments to eliminate any such biases and concluded that , "The results of this study show that subjects were unable to pick out their own Tarot reading from among a group of others and were more influenced by general characteristics of the readings...on the present evidence there seems to be no reason to invoke any paranormal action of the cards or the reader in order to understand how acceptable Tarot readings are produced."

Blackmore's subjects not only gave very high ratings to the face-to-face readings, but, even after she revealed the negative results to them, they were disappointed but "they did

not diminish their enthusiasm for, or belief in the powers of the Tarot. “How is this to be explained?”

She speculates that at least two processes may be important: 1) The Barnum Effect (“the tendency for people to accept certain types of personality interpretation as both specific and accurate as descriptions of themselves.”); and , 2) “the reader learns to produce acceptable readings...From all this we can see that a Tarot reading can provide many of the conditions for an acceptable interpretation. In this study statements were sometimes vague or universally acceptable (‘you fight life instead of accepting what comes your way’), double headed (‘you see yourself as very comfortable but are also dissatisfied with life’), modal, i.e. characteristic of a given group (‘you have an imaginative streak,’ ‘you would like to be understanding and kind’). In addition Tarot reading is seen as highly specific to the individual in the sense that he himself shuffled the cards.”

de Courcy, Ken (1976). *The systematic seer: a simplified system of fortune telling*. Bideford, Devon, England: The Supreme Magic Company.

This consists of four pages of manuscript. De Courcy presents a simple system for giving each person you meet a unique reading. Essentially, De Courcy has you memorize a key word for each letter of the alphabet. For example, the word for A is Association [indicating a marriage or partnership]; the word for B is Blood [indicating an accident or illness]; C is for Competition [indicating antagonism, enemies; etc. Once you have your key words memorized [de Courcy adds a few more items for your list], you simply use the letters of your client's name to generate the key words and then build your reading around this set of words. For example, if the client is named *RAY HYMAN* you would generate the key words:

R: Relative (A member of the family)
A: Association (a marriage or partnership)
Y: Yawn (To tire of something or somebody)
H: Hazard (A need to take care)
M: Money (Wealth)
N: Nurse (a need for help).

Several possible stories could be made from this set of descriptors. For example, the reader might warn the client that he may be taking his marriage for granted, but should take care that his wife may be becoming bored in the relationship. You see the possibility of financial circumstances improving greatly and you might suggest that the client take a break from his focus on acquiring money, and pay more attention to rekindling his romance with his wife. De Courcy's simple system was greatly expanded by Richard

Webster.

Forer, B.R. (1949). The fallacy of personal validation: a classroom demonstration of gullibility. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 44, 118-123.

I described Forer's classical experiment on pages 7-9 of this document. This paper still bears careful study. Forer writes that, "A universally valid personality description is of the type most likely to be accepted by a client as a truth about himself, a truth which he considers unique in him. Many, if not most, individuals are able to recognize the characteristics in themselves—when it is not to their disadvantage—while oblivious to their presence in others. An example is the tendency for students to perceive their own problems in textbooks of abnormal psychology. In such cases the individual lacks the quantitative framework of reference necessary for a critical comparison of the printed description and his own self-evaluation."

Forer conducted his classroom demonstration and wrote his paper to warn us about "the fallacy of personal validation." "Testing the correctness of inferences about a client by requesting his evaluation of them may be called 'personal validation.' When the inferences are universally valid, as they often are, the confirmation is useless. The positive results obtained by personal validation can easily lull a test analyst or a therapist into a false sense of security which bolsters his conviction in the essential rightness of his philosophy of personality or his diagnostic prowess. Such false validation increases his comfort in using what may have been a dubious instrument."

Forer made this argument in 1949. He was inspired, in part, to make this argument by Blake Crider's "A study of a character analyst" (1944, *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 20, 315-318). I have included Crider's paper for you to use in one of the exercises that I provide in the Appendix. Unfortunately, personal validation remains as the key ingredient in many of today's claims for assessment instruments and psychic readings. Despite Professor Gary Schwartz's claims that he has employed strict controls and scientific procedures to test his mediums in his afterlife experiments, every single piece of his evidence for his mediums having communicated with the dead relies on personal validation.

In addition to the personality sketch that he used in his demonstration (which I included in my earlier account of Forer's experiment), Forer includes "a universally valid personality sketch" which was created by the psychologist D.G. Paterson. I include it here because you might find it useful to try on your clients (as well as on yourself).

Above average in intelligence or mental alertness. Also above average in accuracy—rather painstaking at times. Deserves a reputation for neatness—dislikes turning out sloppy work. Has initiative; that is, ability to make suggestions and to get new ideas, open-mindedness. You have a tendency to worry at times but not to excess. You do get depressed at times but

you couldn't be called moody because you are generally cheerful and rather optimistic. You have a good disposition although earlier in life you have had a struggle with yourself to control your impulses and temper. You are socially inclined, you like to meet people, especially to mix with those you know well. You appreciate art, painting and music, but you will never be a success as an artist or as a creator or composer of music. You like sports and athletic events but devote more of your attention to reading about them in the sporting page than in actual participation. You are ambitious, and deserve credit for wanting to be well thought of by your family, business associates and friends. These ambitions come out most strongly in your tendency to indulge in day-dreams, in building air-castles, but this does not mean that you fail to get into the game of life actively. You ought to continue to be successful so long as you stay in a social vocation. I mean if you keep at work bringing you in contact with people. Just what work you pick out isn't as important as the fact that it must be work bringing you in touch with people. On the negative side you would never have made a success at strictly theoretical work or in pure research work such as in physics or neurology.

Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

One of the studies in this book is highly relevant to understanding how and why cold reading is effective. Garfinkel conducted the following experiment before the current ethical standards guiding research were in place. "Ten undergraduates were solicited by telling them that research was being done in the Department of Psychiatry (at UCLA) to explore alternative means to psychotherapy 'as a way of giving persons advice about their personal problems.' Each subject was seen individually by an experimenter who was falsely represented as a student counselor in training. The subject was asked to first discuss the background to some serious problem on which he would like advice, and then to address to the 'counselor' a series of questions each of which would permit a 'yes' or 'no' answer. The subject was promised that the 'counselor' would attempt to answer to the best of his ability. The experimenter-counselor heard the questions and gave his answers from an adjoining room, via an intercommunication system. After describing his problem and furnishing some background to it, the subject asked his first question. After a standard pause, the experimenter announced his answer, 'yes' or 'no.'....The sequence of answers, evenly divided between yes's and no's, was predecided with a table of random numbers...Following the exchange of questions and answers the subject was asked to summarize his impression of the entire exchange."

In spite of the answers being a random series of yes/no replies to their questions, the subjects all believed that the answers, even when surprising, were thoughtful and psychiatrically insightful. They all felt the session was rewarding and therapeutic.

Gresham, W.L. (1948). *Monster midway*. NY: Rinehart & Company. Ch 7: The Romany Trade.

This is a book about the carnival by the author of *Nightmare Alley*. His chapter on the

Romany Trade covers cold reading in some detail

Hester, R., & Hudson, W. (1977). *Psychic character analysis: the technique of cold reading: updated*. Baltimore, MD: Magic Media Ltd.

Only 12 mimeographed pages, but useful.

Howard, P.J. (1994). *The owner's manual for the brain: everyday applications from mind-brain research*. Austin, TX: Leornian Press.

This is a goldmine of information for the cold reader. Everything is worth reading, but the most immediately valuable chapter is the one on personality traits which covers The Big Five Personality Model and its predecessors. The Big Five Model states that we can classify everyone on five major personality dimensions: Resilience, Extroversion, Openness, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness. Lists of useful descriptors are supplied.

Hyman, R. (1977, Spring/Summer). "Cold reading": how to convince strangers that you know all about them. *The Zetetic [The Skeptical Inquirer]*, 18-37. [Reprinted in Hyman, R. (1989). *The Elusive quarry: a scientific appraisal of psychical research*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.]

This is a greatly expanded version of a handout I originally prepared in 1955. I used the handout in a course I taught at Harvard University. This paper contains guidelines and information that I do not duplicate in the current document.

Hyman, R. (1981). The psychic reading. In T.A. Sebeok & R. Rosenthal (eds.) *The Clever Hans Phenomenon*. NY: New York Academy of Sciences. 18-37. [Reprinted in Hyman, R. (1989). *The Elusive quarry: a scientific appraisal of psychical research*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.]

In this chapter, I explore the metaphor of the reader as a ghost-writer. The default interpretation of a reading is one in which information flows from the reader to the client. This is an illusion. In truth, the client is both the *source* and the *destination* of the information that is gained from the reading. The reader acts as mirror—reflecting back to the client what the client has put into the situation.

Hyman, R. (2003). How *Not* to Test Mediums: Critiquing the Afterlife Experiments. *Skeptical Inquirer*, 27 (No. 1), January/February), 20-30.

This is a lengthy and somewhat technical critique of Gary Schwartz's research program on mediums as described in his reports and his book *The Afterlife Experiments* (see the entry in under Schwartz in this bibliography). Here let me quote from my conclusions:

“The studies were methodologically defective in a number of important ways, not the least of which was that they were not double-blind. Despite these defects, the authors of the reports claim that their mediums were accessing information by paranormal means and that the application of Occam’s Razor leads to the conclusion that the mediums are indeed in contact with the departed friends and relatives of the sitters. Schwartz’ demand that the skeptics provide an alternative explanation to their results is clearly unwarranted because of the lack of scientifically acceptable evidence. A fifth report describes a study that was designed to be a true double-blind experiment. The outcome, by any accepted statistical and methodological standard, failed to support the hypothesis of the survival of consciousness. Yet the experimenters offer the results as a ‘breathtaking’ validation of their claims about the existence of the afterlife. This is another unfortunate example of trying to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat.”

Not surprisingly, Professor Schwartz disagreed with my conclusions. His rebuttal to my critique (entitled *How Not To Review Mediumship Research: Understanding the “Ultimate Reviewer’s Mistake”*) appeared in the May/June issue of *Skeptical Inquirer*. My reply to his rebuttal appeared in the same issue.

Hyman, R. (2003, May/June). Hyman’s Reply to Schwartz’s ‘How *Not* To Review Mediumship Research.’ *Skeptical Inquirer*. Pp. 61-64.

Here is where I critique the paper that Schwartz claims I ignored because it met all scientific criteria and produced strongly positive results for the survival of consciousness hypothesis.

Hyman, R. (2007). *Manuale di cold reading: Come fingere di sapere tutto sul conto degli altri*. Padova, Italy: CICAP.

This book contains the same material that is in the present manual. The present manual has been updated and enlarged. James Randi wrote the introduction.

Jones, B. (1989). *King of the Cold Readers: Advanced Professional Pseudo-Psychic Techniques*. Bakersfield, CA: Bascom Jones.

The late Bascom Jones wrote this book in collaboration with a full-time cold reader who wanted to keep his identity a secret. The book contains advice from a person who has made his living as a full time cold reader for a quarter of a century.

Korem, D. (1988). *Powers: testing the psychic & supernatural*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Danny Korem is a magician as well as an investigative journalist. He has learned to do

effective cold readings to impress his audiences. He reveals his secrets in this book.

Landers, Ann (1994, Aug 6). Palm readers win one, lose several. Column in *Denver Post*.

I reproduce, in its entirety, Ann Landers column dealing with palmistry.

"Dear Ann Landers: I'd like to respond to 'Troubled in Holland, Mich.,' who was concerned about her young daughter's short lifeline. I can assure her that she has nothing to worry about. Several years ago, my niece, who considered herself a serious psychic, looked at my palm and observed that my lifeline was unusually short. She then showed me hers, which was much longer. She died before she reached age 60, and I am still going strong at 86.--Anti-Hokum in Michigan.

Dear Anti, As I said before--palm reading is not a science; it's a parlor game that can scare the daylights out of a person. My mail turned up a surprising number of letters from people who share this view:

Dear Ann: I'm writing to calm down 'Troubled in Holland, Mich.' When I was young, someone read my palm and told me I would die young. I didn't let it worry me. When I was in my early 30s, another palm reader told me I would soon be stricken with a serious illness but would recover from it. I am now 80 and in the best of health.--Still Here in Ohio.

Dear Ann: Twenty-five years ago, I was talked into having my palm read. I was told: 1. My ex-husband would die of a heart attack within the year. He is still very much alive. 2. I would meet or already knew a man named Arnie who drove a large blue luxury sedan. I am still on the lookout for Arnie. 3. I would be driving a bigger, better car within a year. I kept my old car for 10 more years. 4. I would be promoted to a high position. I worked in a small family business, and nobody was ever 'promoted' until somebody died. 5. A relative would leave me quite a lot of money. No one ever left me a dime. Not one thing the palm reader told me panned out.--C.J. in Arizona.

Dear C.J.: I have hundreds of letters from people saying that the palm readers they had visited missed the mark by a mile. This one has a new angle: Dear Ann: I was interested in your conclusion that palmistry is more a parlor game than a science. Call it what you want. It made a lot of trouble for me. I had my palm read six months ago in Indianapolis. The woman told me I would be moving to a smaller city 'soon,' which turned out to be true. She then said I would have a car accident at a busy intersection. (She named it.) That 'busy intersection' was one I always used on my way to work and back. I made a special effort to be extremely careful when I approached that corner, but dammed if a woman didn't run a light at that very spot. It cost me \$840 to get the fender dents out. What do you have to say about this, Ann Landers?--Just Wunderrin' in Bloomington, Ind. Dear Just: Sorry about the fender, but it may be that whenever you approached that intersection, you became slightly unhinged. I'd say you subconsciously set yourself up for that accident. Never underestimate the power of suggestion."

Magnuson, W.G., & Albino, A. (1935). *The twentieth century mindreading act: the modern*

spiritualist medium's act.

I have a fondness for this classic. I relied heavily upon it when I first began giving cold readings as a teen-ager. I still think it is one of the all-time best treatises on every aspect of cold reading. Jeff Busby Magic, Inc. reprinted this classic in 1988. Much of the content is dated, but the underlying principles still apply.

Marks, D. (2000). *The Psychology of the Psychic* (Second Edition). Amherst: New York.

The first edition which appeared in 1980 was coauthored with Richard Kammann. Kammann died tragically in 1984. In this new edition, David Marks updates the material to reflect the latest claims of the paranormal. Applying the same investigative techniques used in the first edition, Marks not only shows that the major parapsychological claims are based on faulty and misleading methods, but he also provides useful insights into why people believe despite being confronted with disconfirming evidence. Marks uses the concept of “subjective validation” to describe the psychological process by which people latch on to a particular interpretation or organization of a given input. Once the mind has organized and interpreted a particular stimulus or input in one way it is almost impossible to see it another way.

Subjective validation is not only explains the success of cold reading, but it also explains why otherwise “rational” investigators report striking qualitative matches in their remote viewing experiments. Several parapsychologists have openly complained to me that the quantitative requirements of statistical analysis fail to capture the striking qualitative hits that they observe. As Marks demonstrates in his own attempts to replicate the original remote viewing experiments, both he and his subjects saw a remarkable correspondence between what the subject had described and the actual target site. To their surprise, the judge’s attempt to match the subject’s descriptions to the actual sites was no better than chance. The judges were sure that a given description was a remarkable match to a given site. At the same time the subjects were just as sure that the same descriptions matched another site perfectly.

Martin, R. (1990). *The Tarot reader's notebook: a detailed course in giving satisfying and profitable Tarot card readings*. Albuquerque, NM: Flora & Company.

Published by Flora & Company, P.O.Box 8263, Albuquerque, NM 87198. Don't let the title fool you. This is not just about Tarot cards. This is a comprehensive and important treatise on just about every aspect of doing impressive cold readings. You will find valuable advice and wonderful lines on just about everyone of the 137 pages.

Myers, D.G. (1996, Fifth Edition). *Social Psychology*. New York: McGraw Hill.

This textbook devotes a major portion of its coverage to those human errors and biases that cause us to believe what isn't so. Here is a partial sample of what Myers treats with wonderful clarity: self-serving bias, false consensus and uniqueness, attribution errors, the limits of intuition (Myers has a recent book on intuition), belief perseverance, overconfidence, representative heuristic, base-rate fallacy, availability heuristic, illusory correlation, illusion of control, self-fulfilling beliefs, foot-in-the-door phenomenon, self-perception, hindsight, self-confirming diagnoses, the power of the situation, conformity, groupthink, eyewitness testimony, group polarization, prejudice, self-fulfilling prophecy, just world phenomenon, stereotyping, confirmation bias, etc.

Nelson, R.A. (1951). *The art of cold reading*. Nelson Enterprises.

Considered to be the classic work on the subject. However, I think it is of more interest to collectors than to practicing cold readers. The material is dated and the advice has been surpassed by more recent publications.

Rowland, I. (1998). *The full facts book of cold reading*. London: Ian Rowland.

This differs greatly from all the other books on cold reading. It attempts to provide a complete course in how to deliver successful readings. This might very well be the best treatise on the subject.. It is not cheap. It will cost you approximately \$50.00. However, if you are serious about cold reading, this is worth the price. It certainly contains much more material and is much more practical than the books on cold reading being sold to the trade.

Since his first cold reading book, Ian has produced four revised editions. You can get the latest edition directly from him at <http://www.thecoldreadingbook.com/> . With shipping the total cost, depending on current exchange rate, will be around \$40. This seems like a bargain when you discover that an earlier edition sells for \$192 on Amazon.com!

Saville, T.K., & Dewey, H. (1984). *Hot Cold Reading: The professional pseudopsychic*. Denver, CO: In Visible Print.

Saville is a psychologist and Herb Dewey is a professional cold reader [The same one who collaborated anonymously with Bascom Jones on the *King of the Cold Readers*. This book is more systematic and useful than the other book involving Dewey. Both books, however, contain material useful to would-be readers.

Schouten, S.A. (1994). An overview of quantitatively evaluated studies with mediums and psychics. *Journal of the American Society for Psychological Research*, 88, 221-254.

A parapsychologist provides a comprehensive review of every attempt by psychological researchers to evaluate psychic readings. He concludes that, taken as a whole, the evidence

fails to support paranormal powers. He then speculates about why people believe that the readers have provided them with occult and accurate information. The reasons he lists are very much like those that psychologists and cold readers have put forth to explain the apparently effectiveness of the readings.

“The role of the client in this interaction is often underestimated. Normally the focus is on the psychic, whereas the client is assumed to play a passive role. But in the ‘paranormal’ phase, the client becomes active, too. Most clients turn to a psychic because they have a problem that they can’t solve by other means. In addition, clients seek advice, and even if they still have some reservations about the paranormal abilities of the psychic...they will try to prevent a failure. Hence, once the psychic is in the paranormal phase, the client takes an active role in trying to confirm the paranormal character of the verifiable statements by finding facts or interpretations with which they fit. One might say: A psychic is as able as the client allows! Both partners cooperate to make the statements true. Often the psychic helps the client. If the client can’t find a match, the psychic may offer a different interpretation for the statement. Then the client starts the search process again...In addition, a number of other psychological processes, well known from the professional psychological literature, contribute to the apparent success of a sitting. These are:

1. In general, the psychic controls the encounter to a much greater extent than the client is aware of.
2. Many topics for readings concern basic needs or fears that almost all people experience. General statements in these areas that create belief or assurance will often be considered ‘correct’ and as very applicable to the client’s situation.
3. The appearance of the client provides the psychic with information about the person.
4. Clients might not be aware of their nonverbal reactions to statements on topics that are highly emotional for them. The psychic might not be aware that he or she processes nonverbal feedback.
5. Clients have a common tendency to avoid disagreements and dissonance by trying to confirm statements...
6. People tend to attach more value and to remember better correct statements rather than incorrect ones, especially in cases where a search process finally yields a satisfactory interpretation. The search process itself and the initial false interpretations are quickly forgotten.
7. People do poorly at estimating probabilities, and they tend to underestimate the probability of correct statements.
8. Clients have a tendency to attribute a paranormal character to all statements made in the ‘paranormal’ phase of the sitting, including simple ones to which in normal conversation they would attach no importance.
9. Most statements have a variety of interpretations. This not only strongly increases the probability of being correct, but it also creates a situation in which a client may affirm a statement based on an interpretation that is different from that which the psychic intended; that is, the client ‘reads in’ the correct answer.
10. Clients may strongly underestimate the experience of psychics. Because clients accept

the 'paranormal' state of the psychic, they seem to assume that in this state normal psychological processes, such as the effect of experience and rational inference, are excluded. This is certainly not the case because one can clearly see the effect of feedback given by the client on subsequent statements of the psychic...

11. To a client, his or her own problems and situation are unique, but that does not apply to the psychic. Most questions and problems that clients present to them are rather common. Thus, a standard repertoire of possible answers often can answer any given client's need.

12. An interaction is an active process from which only those elements will be remembered that are of special importance. For the client, the impression made by the psychic is foremost. Hence, clients are inclined to underestimate and to forget their own contribution to the interaction, including comments and feedback they provided."

Schwartz, G.E. (With William L. Simon) (2002). *The Afterlife Experiments: Breakthrough Scientific Evidence of Life After Death*. New York: Pocket Books.

The brief biographical sketch of the author on the dust jacket reads as follows: "Gary E. Schwartz, Ph.D. is professor of psychology, medicine, neurology, psychiatry, and surgery at the University of Arizona and director of its Human Energy Systems Laboratory. After receiving his doctorate from Harvard University, he served as a professor of psychology and psychiatry at Yale University, director of the Yale Psychophysiology Center, and co-director of the Yale Behavioral Medicine Clinic. He has published more than four hundred scientific papers, edited eleven academic books, and is the co-author with Linda G. Russek, Ph.D. of *The Living Energy Universe*."

Given such credentials, journalists and readers cannot easily dismiss Schwartz's research and claims as the product of a crackpot who has no scientific credibility. It is not surprising that this book can create much dissonance on the part of otherwise skeptical readers. The dust jacket provides a preview of the book's contents: "An esteemed scientist's personal journey from skepticism to wonder and awe provides astonishing answers to a timeless question: Is there life after death? Are love and life eternal? This exciting account presents provocative evidence that could upset everything that science has ever taught. Daring to risk his worldwide academic reputation, Dr. Gary E. Schwartz, along with his research partner Dr. Linda G. Russek, asked some of the most prominent mediums in America—including John Edward, Suzane Northrup, and George Anderson—to become part of a series of extraordinary experiments to prove or disprove, the existence of an afterlife.

"This riveting narrative, with its electrifying transcripts, puts the reader on the scene of a breakthrough scientific achievement: contact with the beyond under controlled laboratory

conditions. In stringently monitored experiments, leading mediums attempted to contact dead friends and relatives of `sitters' who were masked from view and never spoke, depriving the mediums of any cues. The messages that came through stunned sitters and researchers alike...Dr. Schwartz was forced by the overwhelming positive data to abandon his skepticism, reaching some startling conclusions.”

For the purposes of this workshop, you should find this book valuable because Schwartz provides several excerpts from actual readings by the mediums in his laboratory. In addition, he provides a running commentary of his thoughts about the content and accuracy of each statement as it occurs. He provides these examples to show that his mediums are not engaging in cold reading or simply throwing out vague generalizations that can apply to anyone. Instead, he insists, these samples from actual readings provide striking examples of specific hits and patterns of information that are unique to the intended sitter. These patterns of specific hits, he argues, cannot be explained away by the critics as lucky guesses, the results of fishing, fraud, or other normal causes.

I believe you will find it highly instructive to carefully examine these excerpts and Schwartz' interpretation of them. Keep in mind, when you do so, that these excerpts have been selected from a very large data base of readings just because they were the most striking examples of `hits.' For some of these examples, Schwartz actually calculates the conditional probabilities that such a combination of statements fitting the sitter could have occurred by chance. In each case these probabilities are extremely low ranging from odds of less than a million to one to odds of less than a trillion to one. What is going on? You will have to think carefully about this one.

Here is a short example from one of John Edward's readings to a sitter in Schwartz's laboratory. Near the end of one reading, Edward suddenly said:

“And enjoy the tea”...I have no idea what that means, “enjoy the tea”—like I feel like I'm; having tea but enjoy it. Like “drink”...I have no idea what this is, but I feel it's kind of inside humor. “Enjoy the tea.”

Earlier in the book, in regards to this same passage, Schwartz informs us that, “The sitter had never liked tea when her husband was alive, but since his death had begun to drink tea regularly.” In the second accounting of this passage, Schwartz states, “If John was not really communicating with her deceased husband, how would he have known that she had never liked tea when he was alive but since had developed a taste for it?” This passage is instructive in what it reveals about inference making (going beyond the information given). Schwartz is crediting Edward with knowing “that she had never liked tea when he was alive but since had developed a taste for it.” Nothing in Edward's utterance about tea indicates that he knew that she had never liked tea. Nothing in his utterance indicates that she had subsequently acquired a taste for tea. Indeed, from what Schwartz has told us, we do not know if the sitter has acquired a taste for tea. She may have started drinking for medicinal purposes or may have been ordered by her doctor to stop drinking coffee.

Schwartz's book is worth a careful study of other reasons. When he supplies some excerpts from readings, he sometimes calculates the conditional probabilities of just that pattern of utterances matching the sitter just by chance. His calculations yield extraordinarily low probabilities, sometimes as much as less than one in a trillion probability of such a pattern occurring just by chance. Yet, I have argued he has got it exactly backwards. This involves the concept of degrees of freedom. Given the lack of syntactic and other constraints in the readings, combined with hedges of all sorts, the probability approaches certainty that a motivated sitter will find a match in the reading for her particular circumstances. Interesting enough, Schwartz has admitted that only dedicated sitters, who are prone to believe in the process, produce positive results. Each additional degree of freedom given to the sitter, increases the probability of hitting exponentially. The medium can toss out a name or description and is given credit for a hit if the sitter can find anyone who passed over whom she knew that fits the name or description. Another degree of freedom is added by the fact that the medium is given credit for a hit, if the sitter cannot find a match among the departed but does have living acquaintances who fit the description. Still another degree of freedom is added when the sitter at first denies the relevance of an item and then later discovers it was relevant.

The wiggle-room does not end at this point. In some cases, the medium's statements seem to make no sense for the sitter. No matter, Schwartz manages to discover that the statements can apply to a previous sitter or to the experimenter (what Schwartz calls "cross talk."). Still additional degrees of freedom are gained through other means such as when John Edward's reading assumes that the sitter's husband is dead when he is alive and sitting in the adjoining room. Some months later this same husband gets killed in a motorcycle accident. Schwartz manages to rescue what at first looks like an embarrassing miss by declaring it a case of precognition! Given these various ways of obtaining a hit, the mediums cannot miss. Indeed, this entire research program seems to suffer from lack of falsifiability.

Schwartz, G.E. (2003, May/June). How *Not* To Review Mediumship Research. *Skeptical Inquirer*. Pp. 58-61.

Schwartz elaborates on his "two fundamental disagreements" with my review of his afterlife experiments. He claims that I chose to ignore "historical, procedural, and empirical facts that are inconsistent with his interpretive descriptions of our experiments." He also claims that I chose "not to acknowledge the totality of the findings..."

Sheehy, G. (1976). *Passages: predictable crises of adult life*. New York, NY: E.P. Dutton.

Sheehy did write her best-seller as a manual for cold readers. Sheehy describes in wonderful detail the crises and problems that confront males and females at each decade

of their lives. She provides rich case histories and many wonderful images to capture what individuals at each age level are experiencing. On the cover of a paperback edition is this statement: *At last, this is your story. You'll recognize yourself, your friends, and your loves. You'll see how to use each life crisis as an opportunity for creative change--to grow to you full potential. Gail Sheehy's brilliant road map of adult life shows the inevitable personality and sexual changes we go through in our 20s, 30s, 40s, and beyond.* As I said, Gail Sheehy did not have cold reading in mind when she wrote her classic. However, just about every major professional cold reader has read and absorbed this book. I read it on my flight from London to Buffalo to prepare for my radio appearance as Mr. X. I successfully used material from this book in some of my readings.

Gail Sheehy updated *Passages* with her 1996 book *New Passages*. Three years later she published *Understanding Men's Passages*.

Snyder, C.R., & Shenkel, R.J. (1975, March). Astrologers, handwriting analysts and sometimes psychologists use...the P.T. Barnum Effect. *Psychology Today*, 52-54.

This article summarizes some studies that the authors conducted to further investigate the Forer effect. They used Forer's sketch in their investigations. They found, for example, that people rated the sketch as more highly descriptive of themselves if they believed it had been specifically prepared for them. "Perhaps, people need to feel unique, and therefore selectively attend only to those statements in a description that happen to apply to them. They are oblivious to the fact that the interpretation is also correct for their mother-in-law, plumber, boss or barber."

In one study, the students were told that they were participating in an experiment of people's feelings about horoscopes. "Everyone received the same handwritten horoscope, comprised of statements from the popular astrology book, *Linda Goodman's Sun Signs*. Some subjects didn't have to give any information about their birth; when they received the horoscope they were told it was one that was 'generally true of people.' Other subjects had to give the year and month of their birth, or the year, month and day, and were led to believe the horoscope was based on this information.

"All the participants rated how closely the horoscope described their personalities on a five point scale. The average rating for those who gave no information about their birth date was 3.24. For those who gave the year and month it was 3.76, while for those who gave the year, month and day it was 4.38.

"Thus, the best way to get someone to accept a horoscope as true was to tell the individual it was based on his or her year, month and day of birth. In actual practice, serious astrologers require the hour and minute of birth too. [R. H.: they also require the geographical location]. This very specific request may produce even greater acceptance than we obtained in the laboratory."

Sundberg, N.D. (1955). The acceptability of “fake” versus “bona fide” personality test interpretations. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 50, 145-147.

Sundberg conducted an experiment that added an additional control to the classic demonstration by Forer. He obtained Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventories (MMPI) from 44 students in a psychology class. The MMPI is the most widely investigated and used personality inventory in psychology. For each student, “two psychologists experienced with the MMPI wrote individual interpretations of the profiles covering the following four topics: mood, physical and mental complaints, conflict areas, and social attitudes and behavior. Two stereotyped, or ‘fake,’ descriptions covering the same topics were produced from Forer’s (1) most accepted statements and from judge’s selections...The two fake interpretations were paired randomly with the bona fide interpretations. Relative position on the page also varied randomly.” Each student was presented with a sheet of paper on which was typed his or her own interpretation and one of the fake interpretations. The student had to answer two questions: 1) “Which interpretation describe you better?” and 2) “One of these interpretations is not yours; the other one is written from your test results especially. Which one is written for you?” In addition, Sundberg gathered additional data by having close friends of the students also pick which of the two readings described their friend better. Finally, another group of students were each given all the bona fide and fake interpretations and asked to rate them according to how well they described their own personalities.

Only 18 of the 44 students chose the bona fide interpretation as the one that described themselves better. Only 20 of the 44 students were able to correctly choose the bona fide interpretation as the one that was specially written for them. Both these outcomes are consistent with chance.

The individual interpretation that received the highest ranking among students as descriptive of themselves were the following (one for males and one for females):

For Male Students: *This record points to a person who is very normal in his attitudes, behavior, and relationships with people. He gets along well without effort. People like him naturally and he is not overly critical either of them or of himself. He is neither overly conventional nor overly individualistic. The prevailing mood is one of optimism and constructive effort, and he is not troubled by periods of depression, psychosomatic illness, or nervous symptoms.*

For Female Students: *The person to whom this record belongs appears to be a cheerful, well-balanced person. She may have some alternation of happy and unhappy moods, but they are not extreme now. She has few or no problems with her health. She is sociable and mixes well with others. She is adaptable to social situations. She tends to be adventurous. Her interests are wide. She is fairly self-confident and usually thinks clearly.*

Note that the preceding paragraphs were written by professional psychologists who were relying on the results of a standardized personality inventory. If you compare the language with Forer's statements, which were taken from a newsstand astrology magazine, or with the statements made by Crider's character analyst, Magarita (see the Syllabus), you will see legitimate psychological characterizations resemble closely those of astrologers and 'psychic' readers. One reason for this is that statements about personality and temperament, unlike assessments of intelligence and aptitude, refer to what people are likely to do *on the average*. To say that a person appears to be "cheerful" can be true if the person is cheerful a majority of the time, all the time, or even, some of the time. To be valid and useful, a psychological characterization must be one that distinguishes the person being described from other persons. It might very well be true that a person who is described by a psychologist (or reader) as cheerful is actually cheerful on a higher percentage of occasions than most other people. It is unlikely, however, that the person in question can reliably assess if he or she is cheerful on a higher percentage of occasions than most other people. This is one reason why personal validation is untrustworthy.

Tanner, A. (1910). *Studies in Spiritism*. New York: D. Appleton. [Reprinted by Prometheus Books in 1994].

This is a remarkably detailed study of the mediumship of Mrs. Leonore Piper, who, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, was the most famous and respected communicator with the dead. William James devoted twenty years to studying her and never could decide whether she was truly communicating with the dead or was engaged in some form of self- or other-deception. In collaboration with the famous psychologist G. Stanley Hall, Ms. Tanner critically examines the career of this renowned medium as well as provides verbatim records of six seances she and Baldwin held with Mrs. Piper. Tanner provides detailed commentaries on each passage of the records and concludes that nothing paranormal was taking place.

Webster, R. (1985). *Quick & Effective Cold Reading*. Brookfield Press, 87 Edmund Street, Auckland, 5, New Zealand.

Webster, R. (1986). *How to build up a psychic practice with full length cold readings*. Brookfield Press.

Webster, R. (1987). *Psychometry from A to Z*. Brookfield Press.

Webster, R. (1991). *Cold reading for the magician*. Brookfield Press.

Webster does it all. He has made his living as a magician, children's magician, mentalist, horoscope pitchman, cold reader, private reader, past life regressionist, and teacher of psychic development classes. All of his booklets have valuable information, especially since it is based upon his professional experience. The book *Psychometry from A to Z* describes in detail his elaboration of de Courcy's system described above. With Webster's system you can stand before audiences and give detailed and effective readings to as many clients as you desire.

Cold readers, in a sense, compete with personality tests such as the Rorschach, the MMPI, and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). All these techniques do equally well in convincing both practitioners and clients that they “work.” I strongly recommend that you read Annie Murphy Paul's *The Cult of Personality Testing: How personality tests are leading us to miseducate our children, mismanage our companies, and misunderstand ourselves.*

Appendix 1: Talking to the Dead

Mediums such as John Edward, Sylvia Browne and James Van Praagh have gained notoriety by giving readings to people who call in on television shows. These mediums succeed partially for the same reasons that other ‘psychic’ readers do. However, they have something else going for them. Lacking a conscience, they can exploit the fact that many people desperately would like to communicate with their departed loved ones. This desire to reach their friends in the other world is so great that they will latch onto any hint that a communication is coming from “over there.” If you have watched Edward, Browne, or Van Praagh in action you will realize that these exploiters of people’s most cherished hopes use the most blatantly obvious ploys. They do not use, nor apparently do they need, the more sophisticated techniques taught in this manual. All that that is required is an underdeveloped conscience and the willingness to toss out random and puerile guesses with a straight face.

I COPIED THE TRANSCRIPT, PLUS THE COMMENTARY, FROM THE BLOG “SKEPTICO: CRITICAL THINKING FOR AN IRRATIONAL WORLD. <http://skeptico.blogs.com/>

The blogger includes much of the transcript of John Edward’s readings for callers to the Larry King show. Unlike his regular TV appearances, the transcript is unedited. I include it here so that you can read it and see for yourself the simple and formulaic approach that Edward uses. By the standards of the principles discussed in my manual, Edward’s technique is crude, and pathetically obvious. Yet it ‘works.’ And it works big time! I include it here to show you that if Edward can succeed with the crudest and most blatantly obvious guesswork, then you should have no fears that you can go succeed in doing a reading. If you use the principles in this manual, you will be way ahead of Edward in the sophistication of your reading.

MAY 09, 2006

John Edward Re-visited

A few weeks ago Randi in his commentary analyzed a portion of one of **John Edward's "Crossing Over"** talking-to-the-dead scam TV shows from December 2000. Randi figured Edward got three guesses right out of 23 – abysmal considering the show is edited to make him look better than he really is.

This reminded me that a few years ago, for a friend I analyzed a transcript of Edward's cold reading guessing game on Larry King Live, from June 19 1998. Since re-cycling old work takes less time than writing something new, I thought I would reproduce the analysis below for your amusement. You're going to have to count the hits v misses yourself, although I'm pretty sure the ratio is similar to what Randi found. Worse, probably – the live TV show allows no editing.

First, for those unfamiliar, a few of Edward's cold reading techniques:

1. Make a lot of guesses. To start with, guess common initials – J (James/Jimmy), R (includes Bob, Robert), M (common especially among older women). Can't go wrong with these in America.
2. Guess "chest area" as cause of death – covers all heart attacks as well as lung cancer. At a pinch can cover for a car accident too. Also, guess "cancer" – someone in the family must have died of it sometime.
3. Ask about "father figures" or "mother figures" – covers a multitude including older brothers/sisters, aunts/uncles – the caller will supply the actual answer that Edward can pretend *he* got.
4. Allow caller to "help", This is a big part of the psychology of cold reading – the caller feels it is his or her fault if Edward guesses wrong and so *the victim caller*, if possible, will try to turn Edward's miss into a hit.
5. Ask questions such as (for example) "who died in a car accident". If you are lucky, someone will fit the guess and you look like a hero. If you are wrong you have not actually said anyone died in a car accident,

and so cannot be accused of being wrong. Everyone will forget the wrong guesses. (Remember, confirmation bias is your friend.)

6. Ask "do you understand". Caller will reply "yes" – they understand what Edward is saying and it appears they agree with him. But "I understand" is not the same as "you are correct".
7. If your guess is wrong, insist the caller, not Edward, is wrong. The caller just doesn't realize he had the older brother that Edward incorrectly guessed he had. Always sound supremely confident *especially* when you guess wrong – caller will think their knowledge of their own family is incorrect.

With those tricks in mind, let's go to the transcript. Incidentally, this transcript does not appear to be on CNN's website anymore, although I can verify I copied it verbatim when it was up. For fun, you could try analyzing a more recent transcript yourself. All bold is mine to emphasize the cold reading tricks and features.

CALLER 1

CALLER: I'm calling about my mother.

EDWARD: OK, stop right there. Your first name?

CALLER: Linda.

KING: Just give us your name and who you're asking for.

CALLER: My mother.

EDWARD: OK, Linda, the first thing I want talk about is, I know you're looking for your mom but I'm getting an older male who's also there on the other side. I feel like this is somebody who would be above you, which means it's like a **father-figure, or an uncle, and he passes from either lung cancer or emphysema, tuberculosis; it's all problems in the chest area**. OK, that's the first thing. And I feel like there's a J or a G-sounding name attached to this.

"CHEST AREA" Covers about 50% of causes of death in America. Also, the "J" name makes its first appearance (didn't take him long).

CALLER: That's my mother.

EDWARD: She's got a very dominant personality.

CALLER: That's my mother. Her first name starts with G and she had emphysema.

Edward had said the "chest area" person was the "older **male**". Caller recollects this ailment is her **Mother**. Note how caller accepts this as a hit. (The first call and already the caller is working with Edward to turn a miss into a hit – see # 4 above.)

EDWARD: Hold on. Does the month of August have a meaning for her, or the 8th of a month?

Fishing question.

CALLER: Not that I know of.

EDWARD: OK, I want you to write this down, because she's telling me to say "eight" then. I have to tell you that this is coming through so strong there's a male, it's got a very dominant energy, but this is how I'm interpreting it, and she's telling me to talk about "eight." "Eight" to me would indicate that the month of August has a meaning, or that the eighth of a month has a meaning. She's telling me that there's a father-figure that's there, so **I don't know if your father's passed** but there's a father-type figure...

Fishing to see if her Father was dead. If caller had replied yes, Edward would then have milked this one. But think about it: if he's talking to her Mother and other dead people why does he have to ask if her Father had passed?

CALLER: No, my father-I just spoke to him on my son's phone and he wanted me to ask...

EDWARD: Wait a second.

EDWARD CUTS OFF THE CALLER'S QUESTION – doesn't want anything too specific that he couldn't answer.

KING: He's nodding, yeah, your mother was tough.

Shut up Larry

EDWARD: There's a father-figure...

KING: I can see your father, yeah.

What does Larry King think he is seeing now?

EDWARD: ... who's with her, from what she's showing me.

CALLER: Her father?

EDWARD: It's not her father. It's connected to you. So I don't know if there's a father-in-law for you who's passed, but there's a father-figure who's there. It's a male figure who's there.

The guess of "8" didn't come to anything. Or August. Or this "father figure". Nothing.

KING: But the important thing is, how is she doing?

EDWARD: Your mom is fine and I think it's important that you know that she was around-somebody missed seeing her from what she's showing me, and she's telling me to let you know that.

She's "fine". That's OK then. Pity he didn't let the caller answer the question she wanted asked. And there is no "older male" figure: the caller said her Father was alive.

CALLER 2

KING: Old Bridge, New Jersey, hello.

CALLER: Hi. This is Peter.

KING: Hi, Peter.

CALLER: I'm looking about-asking about my brother Michael.

EDWARD: OK, hold on Peter. Again, I get a lot of information through dates. The first thing that's coming through is I'm getting the feeling that April or the fourth of a month holds some type of a meaning. In the family does April have a meaning? Birthday or anniversary?

Fishing questions.

CALLER: **No.**

EDWARD: On your mom's side of the family, Peter. They're telling me "April."

CALLER: Not that I know of.

EDWARD: Hold that thought. On your mom's side of the family there's an older female who has crossed over. It's either her aunt or your grandmother. There's an M-sounding name that's attached to this, besides your brother, who you said is Michael,

And now the "M" makes an appearance. Only the second caller and already we've had J and M (plus a G for luck).

CALLER: Mavis.

EDWARD: And they're telling me that there's something to do with the fourth month or the fourth of a month, and I'm also getting the feeling of being out of state, so I don't know if your brother was away from you or at a distance from you, but I see **something as being debilitating and affecting the body.**

From someone who died? No way!

But I think your brother is OK.

CALLER: That's good to know.

EDWARD: All righty. Also, there's a congratulations going out to the family, which is either a happy birthday or some sort of a wedding thing that's coming out.

Someone in the family is having a birthday or a wedding. What are the odds?

KING: Now that comes through you how?

EDWARD: I see pictures. Like the pink rose on the video is their way of expressing their love. When I see like a white flower, that means happy birthday or congratulations.

Fourth month OR fourth of month (or ANY four connection) was wrong, as was out of state. And he sees "something as being debilitating and affecting the body" Wow, from someone who died? Again, what are the odds?

Sum total of this reading – his dead brother is "OK".

CALLER 3

KING: Easton, Pennsylvania, hello.

CALLER: Hi, this is Cindy. I would like to talk with my grandfather and ask him a question.

KING: Can she ask him a question?

EDWARD: She can if he comes through.

KING: What's the question?

CALLER: I just want to know if he can see if we're going to have any kids in the future.

EDWARD: The first thing that I'm seeing is they're talking about-and don't get alarmed, I think this has already happened-they're talking about something burning. I don't know if there was a burning thing or if somebody had a fire in their house, or this is going back a few years. But they're telling me to talk about something that I would see as being like a fire or a barnfire or some type of a fire- type thing. Is there anything that used to happen in the backyard or something that he used to do?

CALLER: No.

EDWARD: Some type of outside fire or a fire thing?

CALLER: No.

EDWARD: OK. This is what they're showing me, so remember what the symbol is to me, I'm interpreting this as being some type of fire, or like fire-thing, but that's what's coming through. As soon as you-as soon as I listened to your voice, and I'm tuning into your vibration, this is what's coming through.

"Don't tell me there wasn't a fire. That's what the dead people are telling me"

And I know you're asking me about kids, but I'm seeing boxes, and when they show me boxes it's their way of telling me that you're moving. Or that there's a move that's coming up.

CALLER: Uh-huh, yes, we just moved.

Who hasn't moved, or is going to move, (home or work), or knows someone who is. "Boxes", I'm underwhelmed.

EDWARD: OK, so that's a confirmation of what they're telling me.

KING: But his-her late grandfather couldn't tell her if she's going to have children or not.

EDWARD: I'm not getting...

KING: Or could he?

EDWARD: He could. He could.

KING: The spirits would know that.

EDWARD: They could come through and say stuff like that.

KING: We'll be back with more of John Edward on LARRY KING LIVE. Monday night, Leon Panetta, Bob Schieffer, Stuart Taylor, on the investigation of the investigator. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

One hit in this reading – "Boxes".

CALLER 4

KING: By the way, this is John Edward's videotape, called "One Last Time: After-Death Communication." A lovely rose on the cover and that's available at 1-800-967 – don't call here – 1-800-967-4100. There's a book coming, same title, this fall. Northport, New York, hello.

CALLER: Hi, Jackie; I'm looking for my grandmother.

EDWARD: Hey Jackie, how ya doing? Um, the first thing I'm getting is I'm getting an M-sounding name; that's maybe like a Mary or Marie. Is that on your mom's side of the family?

CALLER: Um, no.

He's really milking that "M" tonight. M, J, G, R – the most common initials. Still, there is no "M".

EDWARD: No, I'm saying is this the grandmother on your mom's side of the family?

CALLER: Augustine.

Caller supplies the name without having to be asked.

EDWARD: No, is this your grandmother on your mom's side of the family?

CALLER: yes it is; I'm sorry.

EDWARD: OK. Connected to her,

He had to ask if it was her Mom's side. (50% chance of getting it right.)

she's talking about M-A-R. That's maybe like a Mary or Maureen, a Margaret; it's an M-A-R sounding name.

CALLER: OK.

"OK" is not "yes I know a MAR name." M is a very common initial for a woman, especially older one. He still got it wrong though.

EDWARD: She's also telling me that there's a younger male figure who has crossed over who is there also. I don't see if this is a cousin or-it's a younger male figure who's passed.

CALLER: She had a baby that died.

A baby is not a "younger male figure". Note caller accepts this as a hit.

EDWARD: OK, well she's got him who's with her. Um, she's also waving a flag at me, so I don't know if she passed around July 4th, or there's some type of governmental holiday that she passes around, 'cause I don't think she's buried with the flag. But she's waving a flag around me, so I want you to know that. And what it symbolizes to me would be that the person passes around something significant like a Memorial Day, Veteran's Day, Labor Day, there's some type of like a governmental holiday that she's showing me.

Caller has no clue what he's talking about here. Complete MISS, but you can bet your life caller will not remember this miss.

Now, does your-is this-this is your mom's mom?

He'd already confirmed this

CALLER: My mom's mom.

EDWARD: Is there an Anne in that family?

CALLER: Yes.

EDWARD: Who is the Anne?

CALLER: Her niece.

EDWARD: OK, do you know if she just miscarried or if somebody's just lost a baby there?

Fishing question

CALLER: Not that I know of.

Wrong. If he had been right, though, believers would trumpet this as proof Edward is genuine.

EDWARD: OK, 'cause they're making me feel like, besides the child that she was talking about, there's another child who's also over there in that side of

the family. Please let them know the child is OK.

CALLER: OK.

Caller agrees to pass on message that this non-existent child is OK.

EDWARD: And they're also talking about November or the 11th, something about the 11th. 'Cause she's showing me "11."

CALLER: OK.

Again "OK", does not mean "yes she died on the 11th". 11 means NOTHING to caller.

EDWARD: But she's telling me to let you know that she's OK, and let your mom know.

Another dead person who is OK. Along with the child the caller doesn't know about.

KING: Do you see a miscarriage, or do you feel it? How could you come up with miscarriage?

EDWARD: OK, my background-I used to work in a hospital-so a lot of my health care information comes through very, very clear to me from different parts-from seeing different parts of a hospital. And it's just an image of something that I see that I can identify with.

KING: And how did Anne come into you?

EDWARD: I saw my aunt.

Translation – it was a lucky guess. I suppose he deserved one after all the other wrong guesses.

CALLER 5

KING: To Morrisville, Pennsylvania, hello.

CALLER: Hi. My name is Toni and I'm trying to contact my mother.

EDWARD: OK, Toni, the first thing I want to talk about is I'm seeing pink roses and I see thorns on these roses. Now bear with me, here. When I see pink roses it's their way of expressing their love to you. When I see thorns on it, it lets me know that there are issues that were not settled or complete before your mother passed, OK.

CALLER: OK.

Again "OK" not "yes". Wrong guess.

EDWARD: I'm also feeling that there is a something that affects her mind that would either stop her from being able to communicate with you in the way that she needed to, or something that would affect your being able to

communicate with her, OK. This is what's being told – this is what's being shown to me.

Caller doesn't even OK this one. Another wrong guess. (BTW, my guess is that the "thing" that is stopping the caller's Mother from being able to communicate with the caller in the way that she needed to would be that she is DEAD, but that's just me.)

They're also talking about either Josie or Joey or something with a J-O sounding name. Is that connected to her?

CALLER: Yes.

That "J" word again. Isn't that the second time? Connected in what way? Vague.

EDWARD: OK. Does she have a brother who's passed?

CALLER: A long time ago.

EDWARD: OK, 'cause she's telling me to tell you that she was greeted by the brother.

Stop right there. This caller's Mother is apparently talking to Edward, but Edward had to ASK if her brother had died. When this was conformed, then he said that the brother had met her on the other side. If she was telling him "tell you that she was greeted by the brother" why did Edward have to ask this question? This is a perfect example of Edward asking a question, and if the answer was in the affirmative Edward tries to make out he knew this all along. If the answer had been "no", he would have gone a different route.

Also, somebody's missing a finger or had a deformity attached to a finger; do you understand that?

CALLER: Yes.

EDWARD: OK, is that your dad?

CALLER: No.

EDWARD: It's an older male though; who is this?

CALLER: Possibly could be an uncle.

"Possibly" – so caller has NO IDEA if anyone was missing a finger. But caller confirmed it by a yes anyway.

EDWARD: OK, she's also talking about the male who had the drinking problem, because she's showing me a beer mug. Whenever they shows me that, I always joke around and say "They're hanging out at the Other Side pub."

CALLER: That was my brother.

EDWARD: OK. Is he also there?

CALLER: Yes.

EDWARD: OK, can you please know that your mom, your brother, her brother; they're all coming through together. Did somebody there commit suicide?

CALLER: Yes.

EDWARD: OK. 'Cause they're telling me to let you know that they're OK also. And to tell me to wish you a happy birthday. Is your birthday coming up in the next week?

CALLER: Not mine, my sister's.

Someone in the family is having a birthday or some kind of celebration soon.

EDWARD: OK, they're jumping up and down about this birthday. They're saying Linda or Lindy or Leslie; who's this L name?

CALLER: No L name.

EDWARD: OK. When they show me L, it's gonna be like an L- sounding name, like Lisa or Len or-when they come through with names, it's either who they are, who they're with, or "Please say hello to."

The dead people say there is an L name, so go argue with them.

They're also-they also have a, you'll laugh, but they're making me hear a dog, so that means there's a dog who's passed also. So your mom's telling me to let you know that the dog is with her.

CALLER: She had a dog that passed.

What family (or extended family) never had a dog or a cat?

EDWARD: All righty. But your mom's great.

KING: Thank you. What a phony; he got everything wrong there. Missed everything. All right. We'll keep him with us. John Edward is the guest. More phone calls after this.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

For once King makes some sense. Pity he was being sarcastic.

CALLER 6

KING: By the way, when you order that tape, in the tape comes information as to where John Edward is lecturing and where you can reach him. To Coram, New York, hello.

CALLER: Hello.

KING: Go ahead.

CALLER: Yes, **my mother passed away, quite a while ago**, and I'd like to get in touch with her.

KING: What's your name?

CALLER: My name is Karen.

EDWARD: OK, Karen, the first thing that's coming through is not your mother, but I want to tell you that there's another female figure who is older than you, who's making you feel like she either helped raise you, or was around when you were growing up-is coming through. And she tells me she either passed from breast cancer or lung cancer. I see blackness in the chest area, but I don't think that this is related to you. I think that this might be either a friend's mother or a mother-in-law-I don't feel like there's a blood connection here.

CALLER: My stepmother.

Mother passed "quite a while ago" and so Edward guesses caller was raised by someone else.

EDWARD: OK, because I don't feel like there's a blood connection-is she passed?

Edward tells the caller what caller had just told him.

CALLER: She just passed away recently.

KING: From what?

CALLER: Lung cancer.

EDWARD: OK. Please, you need to-this is important. I feel like somebody is questioning the medical care that this woman received, and they're saying that there was nothing wrong here. OK, this is what's being shown to me.

Now, is there a Ganette or a Janet-

CALLER: Janet.

EDWARD: Who's this?

CALLER: That's my step-sister.

EDWARD: OK. She's living, though?

CALLER: Yes, she is.

EDWARD: She's out of your state?

CALLER: She's out-of-state.

EDWARD: Can you please let her know that mom came through? I feel like there is a lot of tears and a lot of crying over-either missing seeing her before she passed, or not getting a chance to say good-bye, which is very, very important. But I think what we need to do here is clean the slate for her; and there is an issue about relationships, or about being involved with the wrong person, or not liking her husband or something like that. I don't know what this is, but I feel like you need to let go of all this stuff, and let her know that she's OK;

A lot of waffle, unconfirmed by caller

and that she's got Maggie or Margie, or some sort of M-G-sounding name, who's with her, and know that she's OK.

CALLER: OK, I'm not sure about the MG.

That "M" name again – isn't that the third time? Still, caller says there is no M name

EDWARD: Remember what I said-it's an M-G-sounding name-not just Mary-it's like Margie or Maggie.

CALLER: OK.

Edward: yes there is.

EDWARD: All rightie. Thanks for calling.

KING: Maybe she liked monosodium explain e.

(LAUGHTER)

CALLER #7

KING: Secaucus, New Jersey. Hello.

CALLER: Hi, my name is Julie, and I'm trying to contact my mom.

EDWARD: OK, Julie, the first thing that's coming through is not your mom.

Sorry, sometimes I gotta talk to them; I'm not an operator; I can't place calls. What is coming through is a younger male figure, who is passed over, and I feel like he passes because of a car accident, or because of an impact to his body-something that impacts his body. He's telling me, "He's connected to R"-like Rich or Richie or Robbie; and he's connected to somebody beneath you. So I don't know if you have a son, and this is a son's friend who's trying to come through to his family. But there's somebody younger coming through like this; and it's in your area, it's not out-of-state. It's not far away-

KING: Do you know anything about that?

CALLER: No, I don't.

Multiple fishing guesses. Also that "R" name again. Complete miss this time on all guesses.

EDWARD: I want you to remember this. This is really important, because many times clients come to me and you wind up becoming the medium; you become the messenger. But it's important that you let the family know that he's with the older male, which is either his father, but most likely going to be his grandfather. And I think-to let you know this-they either died in the same month or their birthday's-there is a parallel between dates or months,

which would mean-he died in the grandfather's birth month, or vice versa, or something connected like this. But the biggest connection is the R-like Richie or Rickie-or there's that kind of R connection that comes up.

CALLER: OK.

Edward insists he is right. Still complete miss, but caller says OK.

EDWARD: When you find this out, you can-you know-let them know here, or let me know, but-

KING: What about her mother?

EDWARD: I'm not getting her mom. That's what is coming through.

Translation – the guess didn't work this time.

CALLER #8

KING: Elizabeth, New Jersey, Hello.

CALLER: Hi, my name is Kathy, I'd like to talk to my mother.

EDWARD: Kathy, did your mom pass from congestive heart failure?

CALLER: No.

Heart failure one of the main causes of death in America – guess doesn't work this time though..

EDWARD: I'm seeing congestive heart failure, filling up with fluids, a lot of problems in the chest, but it's heart-related. That's what's coming through.

CALLER: Probably, yeah; towards the end.

Edward won't accept his guess was wrong. Caller wants Edward to be right and looks for a way to help him – so she now agrees with Edward even though she said he was wrong 5 seconds before.

EDWARD: OK. Did they have to make it-was there-this is strange – did they have to make a split-decision at the end, whether or not to treat her – or something?

CALLER: Yes.

EDWARD: OK. She's telling me that-they didn't do this, correct?

CALLER: They did.

A miss, I think. Answer was ambiguous.

EDWARD: This is incomplete, from what she's making me feel, like something was not done or something was not completely done; and she's telling me it's OK. She's telling me either Ellen or Helen, or Eleonore-it's like an Ellen-sounding name; and she's making feel like it's either-hello to – or it's who

she's with-or some type of connection to this name, from what she's acknowledging. **Do you understand this?**

CALLER: Yes.

Caller understands what Edward is saying. She is not confirming the Ellen, Helen, guesses. (Although Ellen/Helen leaves the door open to any H or E names – two initials for the price of one guess.)

EDWARD: She's also showing me my birthday, which is in October, so it's something symbolic to October for her, from what she's also acknowledging; all rightie, so I don't know if there's a birthday-I think it's around the 16th or the 6th, from what she's showing me.

CALLER: OK.

I think "OK" means "no", except caller doesn't want to say this.

EDWARD: Write the date down. It's October-it's around the 6th or the 16th. OK. It's the 10th month, and it's around the 6th. She's fine, and I feel like she's OK.

Edward: I'm determined this October guess will be HIT, so write it down goddammit. (It's still a MISS though.)

(Snipped load of softball questions from King and rationalizations by Edward.)

CALLER #9

CALLER: Hello, my name is Dennis, and I lost my father three months ago.

EDWARD: OK, Dennis, hold on. Was he in a different country from you?

CALLER: No. He was in a distant city.

EDWARD: OK-I'm sorry, did you say he was away from you?

CALLER: He was in a distant city, yeah.

KING: A distant city?

EDWARD: What's coming through is I'm feeling that there is a distance, but I feel like it's a pretty big distance. That's why I thought it might have been a different country. This is going to sound really strange: did anybody around you pass like in a plane crash or in an accident that they were up high and then fell down-or was high and then went low?

Fishing – trying to find SOMETHING that sticks

CALLER: No.

But fails. This is an example of the sort of outlandish guess that if correct can seem like compelling evidence. If wrong though, no one remembers it.

EDWARD: I want to you remember this-because I'm getting it really strongly-they're making me feel somebody being up high, passing because of an impact, and then falling. There's normally to me what I perceive to being a plane crash.

But doesn't give up. Caller must be wrong.

KING: What about his father?

EDWARD: I'm not getting his father.

KING: OK. We can't do everyone. Fallon, Nevada. Hello.

CALLER #10

CALLER: Hello. This is Pam, and I'm calling about my grandfather, who passed away about 50 years ago.

EDWARD: Okay, Pam, there's somebody more recent, who also crossed over-about three years-three or four years ago-and I feel this is somebody, to the side, someone like a husband, a brother, a brother-in-law. It's a male figure, that I feel has crossed over. He passes because of something that affects his head area. It's either brain tumors, or an aneurysm, or an embolism; something that goes to the head. It's more physiological, from what they're showing me. Do you understand this?

"Head Area". Along with its good friend "chest area", virtually all causes of death can be explained.

CALLER: **Uh-huh.**

Is that yes or no?

EDWARD: OK. It's important that his family hears from him, because they keep teasing him: well, if you were there, you'd be able to do this. And he's telling me: he's trying to do this. They're not listening. So if you can get that message across to them; there is something regarding a phone-I think he's trying to do something with them, either over an answering machine, or a phone. But it's got his likeness, so it's probably an answering machine. Pass that on. Is Jimmy connected to you, or is that to that family?

CALLER: **No, un-huh.**

Again, Jim, Jimmy or James makes an appearance. But caller doesn't know him.

EDWARD: It sound like they're saying: Jimmy, I'm going to leave that with you, but put it to that family. Again, when it comes (INAUDIBLE)

KING: Not her mother?

EDWARD: I'm not getting-I'm not getting who she's looking for.

KING: There's no explain-explanation of that?

EDWARD: No, there's-

KING: It's on her dime.

EDWARD: That's right. It's a party line.

CALLER #11

KING: New Milford, New Jersey, hello.

CALLER: Yes, hello. Hi, john.

EDWARD: Hi. How are you?

CALLER: This is Charlene, and I'm trying to reach my mom.

EDWARD: OK, Charlene. Is dad also passed?

CALLER: Yes.

EDWARD: OK. Did dad go first?

CALLER: No.

EDWARD: Dad is coming through first.

CALLER: OK.

EDWARD: Dad is telling me to talk about-does he have a badge, or do you have a badge?

CALLER: **No.**

EDWARD: Who has got the shield or the badge-who is in the police? Or there's some sort of badge that they're showing me.

CALLER: **No one that I'm aware of.**

EDWARD: **Yes, you do.** They're showing me the father figure, and they're telling me to talk about the badge.

YES YOU DO. The dead people tell me there is a badge goddamit. What's wrong with you?

Is there a second father, like is there a father-in-law who has also crossed?

CALLER: A grandfather.

EDWARD: No, like a father-in-law-or an uncle who has passed? It's an older male, but not that old?

CALLER: Older male, but not that old, with a badge.

EDWARD: **Who had the leg missing?**

CALLER: **Nobody that I know.**

A leg missing? A pretty major thing to get wrong. Imagine if the guess had been right, though.

EDWARD: **Yes, you do.** There's somebody coming through, and they're making my leg feel like it's not here.

CALLER: OK, well-well, my aunt is still living, and she did have a problem with her leg, almost losing it when she was younger.

That was classic – Edward insisting caller is wrong and Edward’s guess is right. Note how caller desperately tries to find a connection – ANY CONNECTION – that will help Edward. Someone somewhere had a bad leg, allrighty then.

EDWARD: That’s not what I’m seeing. This is a male figure, who has crossed over; he’s talking about the leg, which means it’s either not here, or he was paralyzed and couldn’t use it. He’s talking about being an older male, which is above you; which is like a father, a father-in-law-he’s telling me to show you the badge. Like, the badge is the clue here. The badge is the thing that’s supposed to validate who he is. That’s what’s coming through. However, you’re looking for you mom, but these are the people that are coming through with her.

CALLER: OK.

“OK” Translation: “I have no idea what you’re talking about”

EDWARD: Do you have roses, or something, a flower that’s pressed of hers?

KING: Hello? I don’t know what happened to the call. I’m sorry-I didn’t cut you off, so I don’t know what happened.

CALLER 12

Point Pleasant, New Jersey, hello.

CALLER: Hi, John. How are you? My name is Gene; I’m looking for my mother and my brother. I’m a little nervous.

EDWARD: That’s OK. Makes two of us.

Don’t blame him with this record.

Is there a Katherine or Kathleen connected to you?

CALLER: My brother’s name was Keith.

See how caller tries to help? “Kathleen” is accepted as a hit for “Keith”.

EDWARD: I’ll take that. Sounds the same to me.

He’ll take anything he can get. This was closer than most of his guesses I suppose.

Do you guys have the same birthday or something?

CALLER: Mine was in January; his was in November.

LOL – they both have “r”s in them I suppose.

EDWARD: What’s the similarity in dates-that he’s showing me?

CALLER: I don’t know. Mine was-his was November 9th; mine is January 2nd.

EDWARD: Nope, that's not it. There's a similarity-there's a parallel between dates. I similarities between-between you and your brother, from what' being acknowledged to me. Is his middle name with a J?

CALLER: His middle name was Michael.

"J" again – isn't that the fourth time? WRONG though.

EDWARD: Who's got the J name?

CALLER: My wife's name is Joan.

Someone in the family MUST have a name beginning with J – finally something he can claim as a hit.

EDWARD: Is she new to the family from when one of them passed? Hold on. Let me just say this. They're welcoming somebody to the family, like they need to welcome somebody; and they want you to know that they see this person as being part of the family now, and they're connecting this to a J. It's a J-sounding name. Did somebody just have a baby or something?

CALLER: No, but neither one of them knew my wife-or met my wife – before they passed-well, my brother did.

Caller helps Edward by saying the dead people didn't know caller's wife. Well, except the ones who did know her.

EDWARD: OK. I want to tell you that they're acknowledging your wife, but they also want to tell you congratulations; because there's a baby coming.

CALLER: That's surprising.

EDWARD: They're rocking a baby for me, which means that there's a baby that's coming to the family-and they're telling me DN-like Donna or Dan – or something, like Diane. There's a DN-sounding name that coming through.

Caller does not even "OK" this guess.

Who had cancer?

QUESTION. Let's find out who died of cancer and work that one. It is the most common cause of death in America and so there must be someone.

CALLER: My mother.

EDWARD: Was she misdiagnosed?

CALLER: Yes.

EDWARD: OK. She's telling me she had it twice; she's telling me it was in two separate parts of the body. Is this true?

CALLER: Yes. Yes. She had it in her back, and then she had it in her breasts.

EDWARD: OK. She's telling me to tease about you the slippers. I don't know if you have her slippers-or if you bought her, like, funky slippers – like pull-

over's, or something. But she's showing me something about slippers or feet, and it's like a funny thing; and she's, like, trying to be humorous with me. She's got a very comical feeling; she's very light-hearted.

Caller has no idea about the slippers, apparently. Is too polite to say so, though.

She letting me to let you know that she's OK, and that she also acknowledges your wife; and your wife's father, I believe, is there. Is that true?

CALLER: No, he hasn't passed. No.

Obviously there is an imposter on the other side claiming to be the guy's wife's father.

EDWARD: There's an older male on your wife's side of the family, connected to the J, who is there.

Edward is determined he is right.

CALLER: I don't know.

Caller tries to help Edward all he can – the answer is “no” but he can't just say “no”, apparently.

EDWARD: Remember, I said this: the guy passes from either a vascular thing, like a stroke, or it's an ambulysm.

KING: Well, you were nervous when you called in. Right?

CALLER: I'm even more nervous now.

KING: Why? You're going to be a father. I think you ought to go tell her.

CALLER: All right. OK?

KING: And name the kid with a J. What the hell? Or the kid'll be born on the 9th. Who knows? We'll be right back with John Edward. Don't go away.

Why not? So you won't miss any more of Edward's blunders? To see if he guesses a “J” name for a fifth time?

There were actually several more callers after this but I got bored and I'm sure you are too.

Appendix 2

EXERCISE FOR COLD READING WORKSHOP

[The following paper was published as Crider, B. (1944). A study of a character analyst. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 20, 315-318. This was the paper that triggered Benjamin Forer to conduct his now classic experiment on The Fallacy of Personal Validation. If we can find the time, we will have you evaluate it during the workshop. Otherwise, you will find it instructive to make your own evaluation of Crider's study and his conclusions.]

Margarita S., now 30 years of age, has spent some 15 years as a professional character analyst. During this time she has developed a large following of satisfied clients who not only consult her often about their own personality problems but also send their friends for similar analyses and counsel.

Her college education is limited to two courses in psychology in an evening college which, she says, have not influenced her one way or another. She has read fairly extensively in the field of occult phenomena.

She quite willingly submitted herself to an investigation of her work and was more than anxious to cooperate in the study herein reported. Two procedures were followed in investigating her technique. The first was to have 16 college students seen individually by her in the writer's office. After the preliminary introduction of the student to the analyst no further conversation was carried on between them until the analysis was completed. Margarita merely looked at the student and wrote down her impression of him or her, as the case might be. She made an average of 22 statements in each analysis, ranging from 19 to 25 statements about each student.

The analyst first made the statement verbally to the student and then wrote the statement. The student had been instructed not to respond at all and not to show any evidence whether or not the statement was true. After the 19 or more numbered statements were written they were handed to the student subject who was instructed to check the statement he agreed with.

In seven of the analyses there was no disagreement whatever. Three disagreements occurred in only one analysis. For the 16 analyses there were a total of 364 statements, 22 of which were disagreed with by the students or 96 per cent accuracy.

A number of sample analyses are given in Table 1. Psychologists may say that the statements are mostly complimentary, that they are too general, that they will apply to anyone. However, from what I knew of the students, I was in substantial agreement with the analyses as presented. More interesting is the fact the students were satisfied, and in their discussion with each other following the analyses they were of the opinion that the analyses were surprisingly accurate.

As a further check on Margarita's ability to size up people a different group of students was given the Bell personality inventory. With a few days after filling out the inventory the students individually met the analyst in the writer's office. After the preliminary greeting no further words were exchanged between them. Then the analyst filled out another Bell inventory identical with the one filled out by the student. The ratings of the analyst and the student were correlated so as to express statistically the accuracy of the analyses. The following correlations were found:

Health	.27
Social	.21
Emotional	.94
Home	.83

The next step was to find out just what the analyst believes she does in order to make her analyses. At the writer's request she prepared the following statement:

I believe we can and do absorb and register in our feeling worlds the emotions and feelings of those we contact. Some people are more sensitive and can do this at will.

I have been able to analyze personality, emotions, and temperament just by the impressions I receive while looking at an individual. I do not read the features or contours of the face. My findings are determined by thought vibrations which emanate from the individual. These vibrations enter my emotional world and cause the same vibratory frequency to occur in my feelings. Thus, I feel what the individual feels. In this way, I have also been able to determine to some degree, general health conditions. Health vibrations are difficult to analyze because the individual's health vibrations conflict with his emotions. Unless I am feeling unusually well I will not attempt to determine health conditions. I must feel calm and at ease physically and emotionally otherwise I cannot interpret intelligently the numerous conflicting vibrations emanating from an individual.

SUMMARY

I have presented a short study of a professional character analyst and her own explanation of her technique. Since she is one of several who are doing similar work I believe it is of considerable interest to psychologists to know how our competitors work; much better, in fact, to try to understand them than to scoff at them.

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TABLE 1
Case No. 1

1. Does not like to take chances.
2. Very-very sensitive.
3. Very self-conscious.
4. Gets along well with the boys.
5. Above-average student.
6. Worries about her studies.
7. Introvert
8. Over emotional—tries to conceal it
9. General health good
10. Love life not in settled stage
11. Has had broken love affair
12. Should not be in business world
13. Appreciates good music
14. Must always have feeling of security or else is uneasy
15. Is of generous and cooperative nature
16. Digestive organs normal
17. Heart normal
18. Kidneys normal
19. Finds it hard to ask for favors
20. Should not be given technical work
21. Does not like routine either
22. Very stubborn
23. Bad temper when aroused yet she does not display it often
24. This girl may be happiest when being supported
25. Has *many big* dreams

Case No. 2

1. Does not find it easy to make up her mind—yet on important matters she holds firm to her plans
2. Likes to be with people
3. Is not very courageous
4. General health good
5. Can be quite stubborn
6. Is quite self-conscious
7. Subject to change her mind often with small unimportant things
8. Likes a certain boy but things are indefinite
9. Wants excitement
10. Is impatient
11. Very affectionate—not demonstrative
12. Gets along well with both men and women
13. Worrier
14. Lungs—normal
15. Heart—normal
16. Blood pressure—normal
17. Mood swings

18. Is sensitive about things others say about her—and worries over it
19. Is satisfied with past home life
20. Little above average student
21. Not intellectual
22. Very cooperative
23. Expects too much from herself
24. Anticipates too far ahead
25. Past broken love affair
26. Worries over those dear to her
27. Takes studies quite seriously