

DR **KEVIN DUTTON** and  
**ANDY McNAB**

DCM MM



**THE**  
**GOOD**

**PSYCHOPATH'S**  
**GUIDE TO**  
**SUCCESS**

**How to use your  
inner psychopath  
to get the most out of life**



## ABOUT THE BOOK




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What is a good psychopath? And how can thinking like one help you to be the best that you can be?

Dr Kevin Dutton has spent a lifetime studying psychopaths. He first met SAS hero Andy McNab during a research project. What he found surprised him. McNab is a diagnosed psychopath but he is a GOOD PSYCHOPATH. Unlike a BAD PSYCHOPATH, he is able to dial up or down qualities such as ruthlessness, fearlessness, decisiveness, conscience and empathy to get the very best out of himself – and others – in a wide range of situations.

Using the unique combination of Andy McNab's wild and various experiences and Dr Kevin Dutton's expertise, together they explore the ways in which a good psychopath thinks differently – and what that could mean for you. What do you really want from life, and how can you develop and use qualities such as charm, coolness under pressure, self-confidence and courage to get it?

*The Good Psychopath's Guide to Success* gives you an entertaining and thought-provoking road-map to self-fulfilment, both in your personal life and your career.

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**DR KEVIN DUTTON &  
ANDY McNAB DCM MM**



**THE GOOD  
PSYCHOPATH'S  
GUIDE TO  
SUCCESS**

CARTOONS BY ROB MURRAY

**Thus, when a superior intellect and a psychopathic temperament coalesce. .  
in the same individual, we have the best possible conditions for the kind of  
effective genius that gets into the biographical dictionaries.**

**Such men do not remain mere critics and understanders with their  
intellect. Their ideas possess them, they inflict them, for better or worse,  
upon their companions or their age.**

William James, 'Father of American psychology' (1842–1910)

**We are the Pilgrims, master; we shall go  
Always a little further; it may be  
Beyond that last blue mountain barred with snow  
Across that angry or that glimmering sea.**

From *The Golden Road to Samarkand* by James Elroy Flecker (1884–1915). This verse is inscribed on the clock tower of the Special Air Service base in Hereford.



**WANT TO COME UP TO MY PLACE AND  
SEE MY LAB . . . ?**

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The University of London's Birkbeck College is a sprawling complex with some 20,000-odd students rushing about with backpacks full of books. I was meeting Professor Kevin Dutton here because his colleague Professor Naz Derakhshan was Director of the Affective and Cognitive Control Laboratory in the Department of Psychology and she had some of the country's most up-to-date equipment for the type of experiment Kev had in mind for me.

After paying an outrageous university parking fee, I took a walk through the grounds and met Kev. He still had long, centre-parted hair and Buddy Holly-style thick rims, and looked more like the bass guitarist in a 1980s rock band than a professor.

But for once he had the university geek look.

He was dressed in a woollen, blue-checked Rupert the Bear three-piece suit, and a pink shirt buttoned up, but with no tie. He resembled one of those mad professors who forgot to dress properly or put his shoes on before leaving the house because his brain couldn't stop thinking professor stuff from the moment he woke up after dreaming professor stuff all night. All the normal life stuff – he just couldn't fit it into his day.

He greeted me with a very Cockney, 'All right, mate, how's it going?'

'Better than it is for you by the looks of things,' I replied. 'Where did you get that suit – Disneyland?'

Kev took me into one of the buildings and we squeaked along white-walled corridors with shiny lino flooring. 'Andy, thanks for doing this, mate. The more volunteers we have, the better the science gets, know what I mean?'

We pushed our way through a thick, wooden swing door and into a white, sterile laboratory. Six or seven young men and women hovered around, being busy in white sterile coats to match the room. It might have been a laboratory with waist-high tables, but the Bunsen burners had been put away. Instead, three of the tables were laden with monitors, hard drives and printouts. A mass of wiring spewed from the back of all that hardware and came together on the floor. From there, it was duct-taped all the way along the shiny lino to a rubber skullcap and a tube of KY jelly, sitting next to what looked like a dentist's chair with a 50-inch flat screen attached to the wall in front of it. Kev nodded proudly.

'Welcome to my world: brain science central, and I'm your chief tormentor.'

He pointed over to the chair that faced the wall and the screen. More wiring led from the chair and joined up to the stuff duct-taped to the floor.

Rupert the Bear was very pleased with his hardware. 'That seat, Andy, that's your world. That's where you will sit once we get the KY on and some of that headgear, and then we'll see what goes on in that nut of yours while you're under the cosh a bit. I'm going to show you some pretty nasty things on the screen and give you an ear bashing at the same time and then measure how you react to it. Easy enough, yeah? You just sit there and the girls will sort you out. Just imagine you're in a hair salon.'

I took the hint, and settled into the high-backed chair as a couple of the white-coated girls KY'd my hair. While I had the salon treatment other white coats unbuttoned my shirt and stuck heart-monitor sensors to my chest. Then came the Matrix skullcap with twenty or more electrodes on the inside, their wires trailing out of the back and down towards the floor like the world's longest hair. This was the EEG (electroencephalogram) recording equipment, Kev explained, the device that measured the electrical activity in my brain. The two girls squashed it down around my head so all the electrodes made contact with the KY jelly. Another white-coat wrapped Velcro around my fingers, with wires

that went into a yellow box on the table. These were GSR (galvanic skin response) measures, Kev said, which assessed stress levels as a function of electrodermal activity. By the time all these students had finished, I looked like I was trapped inside a giant telecom junction box.

‘I feel like Hannibal Lecter in here,’ I laughed.

Kev laughed back, a lot more than he should have as he let go of the headset’s cans and they slapped against my ears. He leant forwards and shouted as if the headset had blocked out the world completely.

‘Mate, you’re gonna be seeing the sort of handiwork he would have been proud of in a minute. I’m getting into professor mode now so I’m binning the jokes. Nothing personal, know what I mean?’

Directly in front of me, about two feet off the wall, was the flat screen. Kev flipped the switch and crackled into life. The sort of music you’d hear in the elevator at a health spa wafted through the headset. Silky, twilight ripples on a lake filled the screen in front of my eyes. It was like watching an advert for incontinence pads.

‘OK.’ Kev’s voice, in white-coat mode, was now coming through the headset. ‘Andy, right now, on the screen in front of you, you can see a tranquil, restful scene, which is presently being accompanied by this lovely, relaxing music. All good, isn’t it? Now what I’m doing at the moment is just establishing the baseline physiological readings from which we can measure subsequent arousal levels. So just lean back and relax, mate.’

I nodded the best I could with all the Matrix gear on.

‘Make the most of it, because in a moment or two, some time in the next sixty seconds, the images are going to change. They’re all going to be of a very different nature to what’s on the screen right now. They’re going to be violent, nauseating, graphic, disturbing. You name it, you’re going to get it.’

‘As you view these images, we’ll be monitoring changes in your heart rate, skin conductance and EEG activity. We’re going to be comparing it with your resting levels. Piece of piss, mate. Any questions?’

‘Bit late now, isn’t it?’

Kev wasn’t up for waffle, now that he was in mega professor mode. ‘OK. Stand by.’

I sat and watched, and the screen suddenly changed. What I got next were graphic, florid images of decapitation, torture, execution, and limbs being cut off. At one stage, because they were so vivid, I actually started to smell blood: the sickly sweet smell that you never, ever forget. The spa music had also gone. The new images were now accompanied by blaring sirens and hissing white noise like the soundtrack to a bad science fiction film.

I sat and took it in. I wasn’t sure how long it lasted, but soon the lake reappeared and the spa music was back in my ears. ‘Job done,’ I thought as I waited for someone to come and untangle me from Rapunzel’s hair.

But no, the visuals and sounds started bursting out at me once more until the spa music came back along with the lake and – this time – even a low-flying swan!

‘Shit!’ I thought. ‘This fucking incontinence ad is doing my head in!’

They all carried on taking readings for another minute or so, and then two female white-coats came and started to unplug me. It all came off easily, apart from the skullcap, and a couple of chest sensors that managed to create two hairless patches. The KY had created a perfect seal and the cap wanted to stay where it was. Eventually they eased it off with a slurpy pop and I caught my reflection in the flat screen. Hannibal Lecter had turned into Jedward.

By the time I got off the seat and went over to the table to join Kev, the printers were humming and he was busy studying paper readouts along with the monitors.

He couldn’t keep his eyes off the data as I came over and joined him. ‘Normally, I ask volunteers if they feel OK and offer them a coffee. But, mate, looking at these readings, I think it’s me that needs



one.'

'I'll still have one, anyway,' I said. 'Milk, no sugar.'

He didn't look up. There were scrolls of paper spewing out of monitors like tickertape, squiggly lines everywhere. 'Sorry, mate, only espresso. We need the caffeine for all this brain work we do here. Do you know what I mean?'

'That'll do.'

One of the young guys nodded and disappeared with everyone's coffee order. I was offered a lab stool to sit on and Kev brought one over for himself and we sat together in front of the machinery. As he pointed, murmurs rattled about from behind me as they took a look at the data.

'Mate, your pulse rate was significantly higher than your normal resting levels after I told you to stand by. That's normal. It's in anticipation of what's to come. See that trace? That's your levels going up there.'

I nodded and agreed, but to me they were just squiggly lines going upwards.

He pointed again. 'But with the change of scene, an override switch somewhere in that brain of yours, I don't know – flipped. Your psychological readings slipped into reverse. Your pulse rate slowed. Your GSR dropped. Your EEG went down. In fact, by the end of the video show, all three of your psychological output measures were pooling below their baselines. You see that? Look, just a bunch of straight lines.'

He turned to me with a huge smile. Someone was having a good day at the office.

'Mate, I've seen nothing like it. It's almost as if your brain was saying: "Bring it on!" And then when the shit hit the fan it responded on autopilot, like a drone in human form. You might joke about feeling like Hannibal Lecter but I reckon the two of you have got more in common than you think!'

Kev kept looking at me and, now we were closer, his eyes were twice as big as they would have been without the thick-rims. His smile was slightly worrying. Like the kind all doctors have when they've found an exotic boil or awful disease on some poor unwitting victim. He was waiting for me to say something. But I wasn't speaking, I was just listening. Half of what he said went over my head anyway.

'Mate, no offence, but if someone showed me these readings and said they came from a human being – one that was *alive* – I'm not sure I'd believe them. You were so in the zone you were . . . in *another* zone. Yeeeah!'

He clapped his hands together in a world of his own.

'So what does that mean,' I asked, 'apart from me not getting too sparked up about watching a video?'

His hand went on my shoulder. 'Mate, you seen *Blade Runner*?'

'Yeah.'

'You remember the test? The Voight-Kampff test, the polygraph-like machine used by Harrison Ford to test suspects to see whether they were replicants?'

I nodded. 'Good film.'

'Well this is the *real* Voight-Kampff test! And you know what it tells me?'

'Go on, you're going to anyway.'

Kev took a breath before making his announcement.

'It tells me that you might very well be a psychopath.'

He stuck his fingers in his hair and crossed his jam-jar eyes to accentuate the point and then saw the reaction on my face.

'Don't worry, it's not like you're going to go mad with an axe or anything. One of the things about psychopaths is that the light switches of their brains aren't wired up in quite the same way as the rest of the planet. One area that's particularly affected is the amygdala. It's a little peanut-sized structure

some say an almond, some say a peanut: who knows? Who cares? – located right in the centre of the circuit board.’

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He knuckle-dustered the top of his head.

‘Now, this amygdala is the brain’s emotional control tower. It polices all our emotional air space and is responsible for the way we feel about things. But in psychopaths – people like you, mate – a section of this air space, the part that corresponds to fear, is empty. There’s nothing there. Zilch.’

He held out his hands at the monitors and the printouts. ‘That, mate, is you. But don’t worry, you’re not the Hollywood kind. There’s good, and there’s bad. Know what I mean?’

‘No.’

He threw back the rest of his brew and wiped his lips. ‘Alfred Hitchcock got us all thinking that every psychopath and his dog spend their days hanging around showers, and as for Hannibal Lecter . . . There are many reasons why those guys go the way of the West – it’s their childhood, it’s their genes and of course the way that their heads are wired up.

‘But, in the right context, certain psychopathic characteristics can actually be very constructive. Look at the lads in law. How do you think these great defence lawyers can annihilate an alleged rape victim under cross-questioning, sometimes causing the witness to break down to the extent she’s affected for the rest of her life – yet still the guy goes home, cuddles his kids, and goes out for dinner with his wife?

‘Or take banking and politics. The financial centres of the world and our leaders are filled with psychopaths – totally focused, totally ruthless. Sure, some of these fuckers have got us in the state that we’re in now. But ironically, it takes the same kind of ruthless sentimentality to get us back out of it.’

He laughed to himself.

‘I once tested a neurosurgeon who rated really high on the psychopathic spectrum. He described the mindset he entered before taking on a really difficult operation. He said it was like an intoxication that sharpened, rather than dulled, his senses. In fact, in any kind of crisis, the most effective individuals are those who stay calm, who are able to respond to the demands of that moment, while at the same time remaining detached. I would say that’s you, Andy.’

He didn’t give me time to answer, even if I’d wanted to. He gave me a schoolboy nudge, shoulder to shoulder. I used to do that to mates in the classroom when the teacher was waffling on about something that we didn’t understand.

But this one knew exactly what he was doing.

‘Mate, I’d say you know something about that. I’d say you’re more than familiar with that bring-it-on mentality that most of us find at the bottom of a bottle. It’s almost . . . spiritual, transcendental, isn’t it?’

He looked at me and nodded.

‘Am I right?’

I wasn’t letting him into my head. He’d gone in far enough already.

‘Except you’re *not* pissed, are you, Andy? You’re not tired or uncoordinated or out of control. In fact, you feel exactly the opposite. You feel sharp, polished, super-aware, don’t you, Andy?’

He paused and I let him take a sip of coffee as he waited for me to chip in. But all he got from me was a smile: in true mad professor style, the cup he was trying to drink out of was empty. He peered inside the blue china, confused as to where the coffee might have gone.

‘OK, I get it. You’re just going to listen. But let me tell you a bit more about yourself when whatever chips happen to go down, er, hit your fan.’

Mixed metaphors, disappearing coffee: he’s losing it, I think.

‘You feel as if your conscience is on ice, don’t you? All your anxieties drowned, like you’ve had half a dozen shots of neurochemical vodka. You just cruise through life, don’t you? All those

psychological road signs that most people learn in their theory test of life don't mean anything to you do they?' 

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He knew there wasn't going to be any reaction from me.

'Come on, you know I'm right. Why fight it? Everything that others see as a nightmare you see as a game, don't you? Maybe you see life like some psychopaths do – as if you're an alien sent to earth to study humans but never understand what the fuck they get up to. And, even worse, why. You just can't understand why others are always flapping about shit, can you?'

I shrugged. 'So which one are you: gamer or alien?'

He chuckled to himself as his eyes strayed back to the monitors.

'Mate, think about it. You came here not even asking if there was any risk. Not even asking what would happen if something went wrong. Not asking anything. Do you think that's normal? I've known people break down in that chair, throw the towel in, try to remove the electrodes themselves.'

He nodded over to the skullcap oozing KY on to a tray.

'I mean, you didn't even ask what that fucking thing was for.'

Kev leant over to me, our shoulders touching once more, and half whispered as if we had a conspiracy going on between us.

Maybe we did?

'You know, there are some who say that psychopaths are evolution's next step. Mate, you could be the next trick that natural selection has up its sleeve. You could be one of the chosen ones. Know what I mean?'

I laughed. I couldn't help it. Me being part of some Darwinian fish-to-lizard story seemed like a joke. Kev also saw the funny side but still kept the conspiracy going. He was now so close he was almost chewing my ear off.

'Look, Andy' – he started to calm down – 'why not let me carry out more tests, both on the cognitive software and on the genetic hardware? They've got some great people here who are totally on top of their game.'

One of the machines went *ping* and Kev disconnected from me as he leant forward to pick up a read-out. The trace flat-lined along the bottom, as if I was dead. He tapped the paper with a pen.

'We could find out a hell of a lot more about your wiring. There are so many other tests we could do. Think of it as me giving you a psychological MOT – you know, opening up the bonnet and seeing what you've really got under there.'

I flattened my hair as I thought about what Kev had said. It made sense, even if I didn't want to admit it. I had always been up for stuff, not giving a single thought to the possibility of fucking up. It didn't matter if I was going to be number one through the door on a hostage rescue; or going undercover in Derry with a south London accent; or, these days, talking to the board members of a company that's going tits up because they don't know their arses from their elbows.

Fuck it, I'd get away with it. I always had, even as a kid. I never thought of anything as dangerous. I thought of it as fun – like going through the levels on a video game.

But when the action started, be it a fire fight, physical fight or just being chased, I was always 100 per cent aware of what was happening, always focused on what I needed to do. I certainly didn't think about failure. Sometimes I was even excited.

That feeling of 'fuck it' that Kev talked about, I definitely had it most days.

In a fight, physical or verbal, it felt like I was detached. It was almost like I was watching myself in slow motion and thinking clearly about what needed to be done and how I was going to do it. There was no fear, no emotional connection to what was happening.

Kev was right. I'd always thought I had a touch of the alien about me.

Why did people worry about things they had no control over?

Why did everyone think about tomorrow while ignoring today and fucking it up?

~~Why couldn't they break down what was happening around them and just deal with it instead of flapping about it?~~

After my time in Kev's world, everything started slotting into place. I'd always felt different, even from other kids on my estate.

But I'd never been able to put my finger on why . . .



## CHAPTER ONE

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**SORRY, I DON'T THINK WE'VE MET . . .**

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Hello! I'm Andy McNab.

You may have heard of me from one or two of my previous books. If you have, all well and good. But if you haven't, the introductions might as well start here.

I was in the British army for eighteen years. Eight as an infantryman and ten in the Special Air Service. I'm probably best known for my first book, *Bravo Two Zero*. It's the story of an eight-man Special Forces mission behind enemy lines in Iraq during the first Gulf war. I was decorated for bravery along with three other soldiers from the BTZ patrol. In fact, our BTZ mission became the most highly decorated action since the Boer war battle of Rorke's Drift in 1879.

Since then I have gone on to write more non-fiction, thrillers, film scripts, and to produce films. I am considered to be one of the top thirty writers of all time. The thing about success is that you need to control it. If you can do that and then use it correctly it'll breed even more success. That's why I'm also involved in business both in the UK and the US – particularly with start-up ventures.

But it's no big deal.

One challenge is pretty much like another to me. I've gone from enemy lines to movie lines and from battle plans to business plans without even thinking about it. Maybe that's why it's been so easy – because I *don't* think about it. Either way, I've never had a problem with problems.

I think they're scared of *me*.

The reason I'm telling you this is because I do know *one* reason why I'm successful – the main reason, in fact.

It's because I'm a psychopath.

But don't panic, I'm a *good* psychopath.

It comes as a bit of a surprise when you first hear it, doesn't it? It did to me. I had no idea until a few years ago when I met Kev – and discovered his liking for exotic suits and even more exotic perfumes. You've just met him too – and though he may not look like it (and certainly doesn't sound like it) he is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Oxford. The man knows his psychopaths and he's impressive.

But enough of me (for now!). YOU want to know what this book will do for YOU. How will it change YOUR life?

Well, it works like this. In the pages that follow, we will reveal SEVEN SIMPLE PRINCIPLES that will make you more successful. And then we'll help you apply them.

We're not interested in what kind of success it is you're after. It could be big:

- **Maybe you want a raise?**
- **Or a promotion?**
- **Or to clinch the deal that will *get* you that raise and promotion?**

Or maybe it's the small things in life that you've never been able to nail:

- **Putting off making that awkward and embarrassing phone call.**
- **Telling the neighbours that you LOVE their chihuahuas. . . but don't like them dumping on your lawn.**
- **Dealing with that friend or relation who still owes you money. You haven't forgotten but they are hoping you have.**

Whatever it is, this book is designed to meet the EVERYDAY needs of EVERYDAY people in EVERYDAY life:

- **in the workplace**

- outside the workplace
  - with colleagues
  - with friends
  - with family
- 

It can:

- make you money
- save you money
- get you out of trouble
- get you into trouble!
- get you preferential treatment

Whatever kind of success it is that you're after, we are going to show you how to get it. But we're going to do more than that. We're also going to offer you a PHILOSOPHY FOR LIFE.

A philosophy for a SUCCESSFUL life.

A philosophy that WORKS.

Trust me – this book is a one-off.

Nothing else even comes close.

And as if that isn't enough, we also do . . . SCIENCE! To be honest, that's more Kev's department than mine. But I chip in when I can. He'll be examining how people like me tick – and how you can, too. I do the sleek stuff. Kev does the geek stuff. Basically, I'll be firing the gun and he'll be telling you why it goes bang.

So, I guess we'd better hear from him. The Geek . . .

Thanks, Andy. You're too kind, mate.

It's May 2010 and I'm at the launch party for my first book *Flipnosis*.

Picture the scene.

Twelve new magnums of vintage champagne have just appeared from nowhere, the world's supply of vol-au-vents is doing the rounds, and Blondie's 'Hanging on the Telephone' is blasting out of the iStation behind the bar.

Everyone is nicely plugged in and the place is in full swing.

Suddenly, from across the room, I hear someone call my name.

'Hey, Kev! Come over here a minute and sign these for us, will yer?'

I look round. Over in the corner, by the publisher's stand, a familiar face waves a handful of books and a pen, in my direction. I edge through the crowd and we shake hands.

'Hello, mate. How are you?'

'Yeah, not bad. Just got in from Hawaii.'

The first thing I notice is the tan. More radioactive than Fukushima.

Then there's the shoes. So shiny they'd probably be banned in California in case they started a bushfire.

The suit is Armani. Charcoal, single-breasted.

I take the pen and pull up a nearby chair. If I didn't know better, I'd say this guy had class.

I open a book at the title page and pause.

'Who's it for?' I inquire, routinely.

'No one,' he says. 'Just sign it.'

'You sure?' I lament, therapeutically. 'What, Billy No-Mates, is it?'

He smiles and opens a Coke.

'I've got plenty of mates on eBay,' he says. 'And these little fuckers go for three times the price if they're signed!'

Who else could it be but the legend that is Andy McNab?

~~Hello, folks, I'm Kevin Dutton – Andy's immeasurably more fragrant, inordinately less tanned, and inestimably more domesticated other half.~~

If *Flipnosis* passed you by (which isn't beyond the bounds of possibility), you might have heard of me from the follow-up: *The Wisdom of Psychopaths – Lessons in Life from Saints, Spies and Serial Killers*.

In it, I argue that psychopaths possess wisdom. And to back up my claim I cite evidence from saints, spies and serial killers.

It took me ages to think of the title.

It's dayglo pink – exactly the same shade as Andy does his nails on a night out.

And oddly enough, he's in it.

I first met Andy when I interviewed him for a radio show I was doing for the BBC World Service. It was some time later that he showed up in my lab. I still get flashbacks today. When I checked out his brain scans in response to disturbing images – images that have most people's grey matter firing faster than Alan Sugar after a night on the piss – I did a double-take.

Far from it being the brain's answer to Guy Fawkes' night that I was expecting, the graphs were as flat as a pancake. He made Hannibal Lecter look like Dale Winton.

It's a good job he joined the SAS. He'd have scared the shit out of them in Broadmoor.

Andy has always been a bit of an outdoors person and he's got his mother to thank for that. He started off life in a Harrods bag on the steps of Guy's Hospital.

When he first told me my initial thought was: well, that's something we've got in common. After screwing up a gilt-edged education and a scholarship to Cambridge when I was at school I ended up working in the Harrods warehouse up the Great West Road in West London. I stacked shelves, took stuff off them and put it into lorries, then stacked them up again.

After two years of that it dawned on me that maybe university wasn't such a bad idea after all, so I started again at an adult education college down the road.

Most of the courses on offer were A levels – and I'd already made a balls-up of those – so I decided to branch out a bit. As luck would have it, Birkbeck College was running a two-year diploma course in psychology at the time so I signed up.

I never looked back.

Ten years later, I was teaching in Cambridge where all those years ago I should've been a student.

All things considered I reckon they got off lightly.

People often ask me: why psychology? And, apart from the teenage aversion to A levels, I often wonder myself.

I suppose, from an early age, it was in the blood. My old man was a market trader in London. I used to help him when I should have been at school – just one of the reasons why Cambridge happened late rather than sooner.

'You'll learn more on the stall than you ever will in a classroom,' he used to say.

And in my case he was probably right.

One summer, when I was around six or seven, I was about to break up for the school holidays. There's a star chart in the classroom and I'm second in the pecking order.

By two stars.

Mum cuts me a deal.

'I'll buy you a Monopoly set,' she says, 'if you top that chart by the end of term.'

Given the timeframe – a little under a week – I'm not getting my hopes up.

And so it proves.

When the bell sounds to signal the end of the year, the standings haven't changed. I'm two stars



short of passing 'Go' and permanently stuck on Water Works. I'm not a happy camper.

Outside the gates Mum and Dad are waiting to pick me up. Dad takes my satchel and shoves it in the boot of the car.

'Kev,' he says, 'I've never seen your classroom. Any chance you could give me a quick tour?'

I sigh wearily.

'OK,' I say and lead him down a rabbit warren of empty, echoey corridors deep into the bowels of the school. The place is deserted. All the other kids left ages ago and the teachers are long gone. Only the caretaker remains, pottering about in the playground.

When we get there, Dad walks over to the star chart and inspects it.

Two short.

'Kev,' he says, 'go and get your mother from the car, will you?'

'Let's just leave it, Dad,' I say.

'Go and get your mother,' he repeats.

A couple of minutes later, when I return to the classroom with Mum, Dad's got a grin on his face the size of the South Circular.

'Just look at that, Clare!' he says, pointing at the chart. 'I knew he'd do it! I'm proud of you, boy!'

Mum shuffles forward and peers at it.

I peer at it.

We all peer at it.

I can't quite believe what I'm looking at.

Somewhere in the space of the last few minutes I appear to have accumulated three more stars.

All of a sudden I'm the cleverest boy in the class!

'Well,' Mum says, as we traipse back to the car, 'you really *did* pull your finger out this week, didn't you?'

I feel a dig in the back from Dad.

'I bet you can't wait to get your hands on that Monopoly set, can you, son?' he says.

A couple of days later – true to her word – Mum buys me one.

It's fabulous.

All colourful and shiny and new.

Later, when I'm ripping it out of the plastic in my bedroom, there's a knock on the door.

It's Dad.

'Here,' he says, throwing something on to the table, 'stick this lot in a drawer for next year. You never know, they may come in handy.'

He pulls the door to and I get up and take a look. It's a set of cheap, sticky-back stars from the newsagent down the road.

Three are missing.

Stuffed down the back is something small and bendy . . .

. . . a 'Get Out Of Jail Free' card.

My old man probably wasn't the only reason I took up psychology after concluding my packing and stacking trips at Harrods. There must've been others, I'm sure. But his sheepskin-coated spectre can certainly be glimpsed in the books I've written since.

*Flipnosis: The Art of Split Second Persuasion* tells the story of how I hung out with some of the world's top con artists, both here and in the US, to see who knew more about getting people to do things: me or them?

The idea was to bring together the very best insights that the science of influence could offer with the top tips, the insider knowledge, that the great persuaders – past and present, good and evil – had amassed.

Having worked for much of my academic life as a social psychologist, I was fascinated by the science of persuasion. That science had thrown up some clear rules of engagement over the years, cogent guidelines as to what works and what doesn't – and my primary aim was to emancipate these tactics and principles, incarcerated, as many lamentably were, in obscure periodicals and quarterlies, and present them, unfettered, to a wider, less specialized audience.

I wanted to sequence the genome of persuasion. Uncover its DNA.

And then go one step further.

I was also intrigued by a highly mysterious subgroup of persuader, 'natural born persuaders' as I called them: influence black belts – like my old man – who wouldn't know one end of a psychology textbook from another, but who seemingly possess a God-given ability to derive the functions of persuasion from first principles and to bend lesser mortals to their will.

Many of these influence virtuosos – which count among their number some of the world's most venomous psychopaths – are the elite of the persuasion world: evil geniuses of social influence who learn their trade on their toes.

Could their deadly skills somehow be distilled into a few key principles of persuasion, I wondered

Did the techniques they had honed in the bars, salesrooms and boardrooms stack up with what the academic study of persuasion had discovered over decades of painstaking research?

To find out, I spent a couple of years crisscrossing the globe interviewing this ruthless elite while, at the same time, running studies in my own lab and trawling the literature for scientific booty.

Once all the pieces of the influence jigsaw were in place I took a careful look at both sets of evidence – the scientific and the not-so-scientific – and slotted them together to form a number of common themes.

What I was left with was an elixir of success: an irreducible model of influence comprising five core principles of persuasion that are a sure-fire winner in any situation.

Which don't just turn the tables, but kick 'em over!

But more on that later.

*The Wisdom of Psychopaths – Lessons in Life from Saints, Spies and Serial Killers*, the follow-up to *Flipnosis*, took things one step further.

If (as I had found) psychopaths were brilliant at getting what they want, then how, I mused, precisely, did they do it?

What dark psychological thunderstorms lurked behind the madness in their method?

To find out, I interviewed psychopaths from every walk of life you can think of:

- from ice-cool hedge-fund managers to nerveless neurosurgeons
- from silver-tongued barristers to ruthless CEOs
- from brutal, cold-eyed killers to Special Forces soldiers

The result was a vast, labyrinthine subway map of the psychopathic mind. A sprawling, interconnected snakes and ladders board of the psychopathic personality – with as many ladders as snakes!

But quite a few readers wanted something more.

*The Wisdom of Psychopaths*, they pointed out, is a *popular science* book.

Not a *self-help* book.

And while it comprised a decent enough brochure for the Psychopathy Tourist Board, what it did NOT comprise was a list of bite-sized, step-by-step instructions on how we can all 'psychopath up'. On how we can each make friends with our own 'inner psychopath' and use psychopathic principles to become more successful during the course of our everyday lives.

It was never meant to, of course.

But suddenly there was an appetite for *exactly* that kind of book – a need for the ‘bottom line’.

In particular, there seemed to be an overwhelming demand for a basic, no-nonsense guide— summarizing the key things I’d learned during the writing of *The Wisdom of Psychopaths*. People wanted straightforward, in-your-face advice about what to do in familiar, day-to-day situations.

- How can I use psychopathic principles to get served first in a busy bar?
- How would a course in ‘method psychopathy’ help me to get an upgrade?
- How do I make friends with my inner psychopath to get that job. . .to get that *guy*?

This book – *The Good Psychopath’s Guide to Success* – is here to fill that gap.

It integrates:

- niche, lightning-hot science from cutting-edge psychology labs around the world. . .*with*
- fun and revealing personality tests. . .*with*
- cloak-and-dagger Special Forces tips from one of the British Army’s most famous and highly decorated soldiers. . .

to present:

- **handy**
- **bullshit-free**
- **easy-to-follow**

success recipes for practically any situation you can think of.

And some you can’t!

You will learn, among other things:

- **Why 8 p.m. is the best time to sell insurance.**
- **Why taking a cold shower might help you get a raise.**
- **How much of a GOOD PSYCHOPATH you are.**

As Andy mentioned earlier, you won’t just learn how to fire the gun, but also why it went bang. That’s something he’s been trying to figure out for years.

Time we put him out of his misery.




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## CHAPTER TWO

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# THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE CUDDLY

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**Blood. Sometimes it sets  
my teeth on edge,  
other times it helps me  
control the chaos.**

Dexter Morgan, *Dark Passenger*

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On 16 October 2012, at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City, I sat onstage next to one of the most prolific serial killers in history.

Well, television history, that is.

‘Dexter’, aka Michael C. Hall, was in town to discuss my recently published book, *The Wisdom of Psychopaths*, and it was a packed house.

As the evening unfolded, the conversation ranged from the techniques Michael used to slip into Dexter’s mindset before going in front of the cameras – how he ‘serial-killed up’ – to the psychological similarities between actor and character in real life.

I’m not sure the audience knew what to make of us, looking back on it. But they seemed to be enjoying themselves – amused, intrigued and scared half to death in equal measure.

And that was *before* the clingfilm!

Finally, as the show drew to a close, I posed Michael a question.

‘If you could steal one of Dexter’s personality characteristics,’ I asked him, ‘and pop it inside your own head, which would it be? Which of Dexter’s qualities, if any, do you think you would benefit most from in everyday life?’

Michael thought about it for a moment and then a sly, Dexterish grin oozed across his face.

‘Calmness under pressure. Stress management,’ he drawled. ‘The more the heat goes up, the cooler Dexter gets.’

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## THE PSYCHOPATH MIXING DESK

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It’s probably fair to say that the two questions I’ve been asked more than any other since *The Wisdom of Psychopaths* came out are these:

- **Do psychopathic personality traits really help us get ahead in life?**
- **If so, what can we do about it? How can the everyday person in the street make themselves just that little bit more psychopathic?**

And, of course, it’s true, isn’t it?

Whenever most of us hear the word ‘psychopath’ it’s images of Ted Bundy and Hannibal Lecter that flash across our minds. Not scalpel-wielding surgical geniuses, silver-tongued secret agents or super-cool Special Forces soldiers.

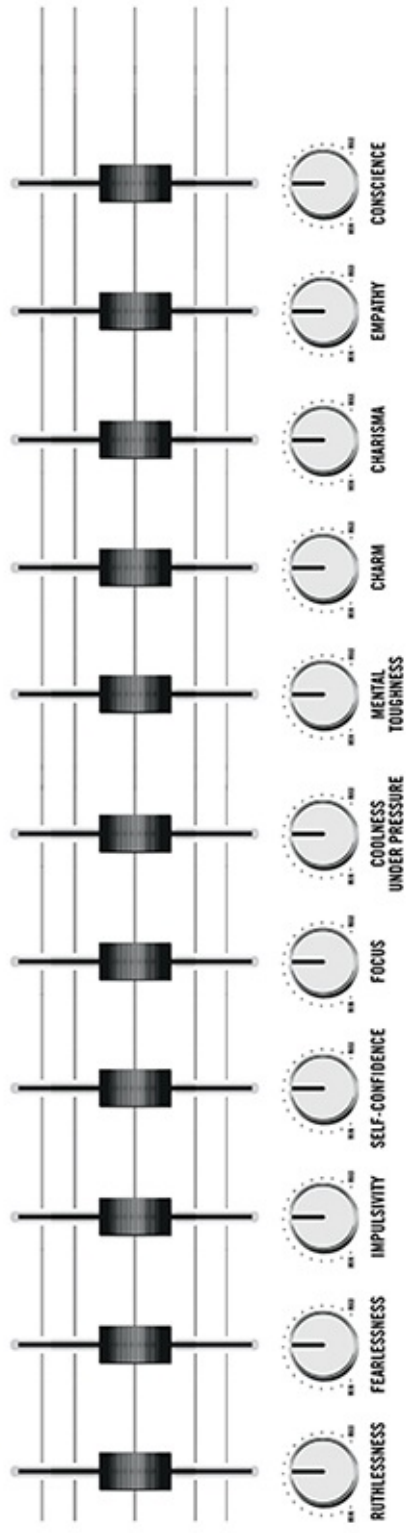
The reality, however, is rather different.

In stark contrast to the headline-grabbing soundbites thrown out by the media pundits and the film industry moguls, when psychologists like myself use the word ‘psychopath’, we’re actually referring to a specific subgroup of individuals with a distinct subset of personality characteristics.

These characteristics include:

- **Ruthlessness**
- **Fearlessness**
- **Impulsivity**
- **Self-confidence**
- **Focus**
- **Coolness under pressure**

- **Mental toughness**
  - **Charm**
  - **Charisma**
  - **Reduced empathy**
  - **Lack of conscience**
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sample content of The Good Psychopath's Guide to Success: How to use your inner psychopath to get the most out of life

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