

The Wisdom of Psychopaths: What Saints, Spies, and Serial Killers Can Teach Us About Success

By Kevin Dutton

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In this engrossing journey into the lives of psychopaths and their infamously crafty behaviors, the renowned psychologist Kevin Dutton reveals that there is a scale of "madness" along which we all sit. Incorporating the latest advances in brain scanning and neuroscience, Dutton demonstrates that the brilliant neurosurgeon who lacks empathy has more in common with a Ted Bundy who kills for pleasure than we may wish to admit, and that a mugger in a dimly lit parking lot may well, in fact, have the same nerveless poise as a titan of industry.

Dutton argues that there are indeed "functional psychopaths" among us?different from their murderous counterparts?who use their detached, unflinching, and charismatic personalities to succeed in mainstream society, and that shockingly, in some fields, the more "psychopathic" people are, the more likely they are to succeed. Dutton deconstructs this often misunderstood diagnosis through bold on-the-ground reporting and original scientific research as he mingles with the criminally insane in a high-security ward, shares a drink with one of the world's most successful con artists, and undergoes transcranial magnetic stimulation to discover firsthand exactly how it feels to see through the eyes of a psychopath.

As Dutton develops his theory that we all possess psychopathic tendencies, he puts forward the argument that society as a whole is more psychopathic than ever: after all, psychopaths tend to be fearless, confident, charming, ruthless, and focused?qualities that are tailor-made for success in the twenty-first century. Provocative at every turn, *The Wisdom of Psychopaths* is a riveting adventure that reveals that it's our much-maligned dark side that often conceals the trump cards of success.

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Editorial Review

Review

“A terrifically entertaining and chilling book.” ?William Georgiades, *Slate*

“*The Wisdom of Psychopaths* is an engaging and enlightening look at both the positive and negative sides of the personality characteristics that make up the diagnosis of psychopathy.” ?Michael Shermer, *The Wall Street Journal*

“[A] high-octane charge across the psychopathy continuum.” ?Kaja Perina, *Psychology Today*

“There's no denying it: we love our psychopaths....[and] in his entertaining new book...Dutton sheds some light on the stunning magnetism of the ethically challenged.” ?*The Daily Beast*

“It's hard not to like Dutton's book . . . Dutton, like [Norman] Mailer, is waging war against the *bien-pensant*. And I'm with him. Life would be more fun if more people cultivated their inner psychopath.” ?Ann Marlowe, *Tablet*

“Dutton deftly navigates through some disturbing subject matter, but his message is ultimately upbeat: Scientists may be able to learn a lot from the darker side of human nature.” ?Allison Bohac, *Science News*

“A convincing study . . . The admirable quality of this book is Dutton's refusal to accept easy answers in one of the more sensational fields of popular psychology.” ?Tim Adams, *The Observer (UK)*

“Dutton spins a solid yarn, turning what could easily have been a dry survey of psych research into entertainment.” ?Scott Olster, *Fortune (CNN Money)*

“*The Wisdom of Psychopaths* is a surprising, absorbing, and perceptive book. Kevin Dutton has amassed a great deal of knowledge about these charming, cold, fearless, emotionally indifferent people, who are so attractive in some ways and so appalling in others, and set it out in a briskly readable prose studded with gripping anecdotes. I found it altogether fascinating.” ?Philip Pullman, author of the bestselling *His Dark Materials* trilogy

“Dutton tackles an elusive, important, and much neglected aspect of the mind: our personality. He presents some highly original insights and does so in a provocative and humorous style?offering practical tips along the way for both ‘normals’ and ‘sociopaths.’” ?V. S. Ramachandran, Ph.D., author of the bestselling *The Tell-Tale Brain*

“Dutton has written a masterful, readable, and entertaining treatise on psychopathy and its manifestations in everyday life. Some of his ideas will generate debate and controversy, but he clearly has provided a thought-provoking book for those seeking to understand the ‘psychopathic’ world in which they live.” ?Robert D. Hare, Ph.D., author of *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us* and developer of the Hare Psychopathy Checklist

“The irrepressible Kevin Dutton has done it again! This time he has produced an irreverent romp through the bright side and dark side of the mysterious psychopath, and does a great job of mixing the scientific with the

personal, offering readers an insider's glimpse into the workings of fascinating persons?and fascinating personalities. Readers will come away both enlightened and entertained.” ?Scott O. Lilienfeld, Professor of Psychology at Emory University, President of the Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy, and coauthor of 50 Great Myths of Popular Psychology

“If you’ve been keeping your inner psychopath locked up in the maximum-security unit of your mind, Kevin Dutton explains why giving him some fresh air from time to time may actually do you?and, more important, the rest of us?a world of good. Just give him this book to read and make sure he’s a literate, functional psychopath.” ?Jesse Bering, author of *Why Is the Penis Shaped Like That?*

About the Author

Dr. Kevin Dutton is a research psychologist at the Calleva Research Centre for Evolution and Human Science, Magdalen College, University of Oxford. He is a fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine and the Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy. Dutton is the author of *Split-Second Persuasion*. His writing and research have been featured in *Scientific American Mind*, *New Scientist*, *The Guardian*, *Psychology Today*, and *USA Today*. He lives in Oxford, England.

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