
How Cold Reading Works

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Introduction	3
The Feeling of Intuition	3
The Introvert	5
The Extrovert	8

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Introduction

Today I'm going to teach you a fundamental Mentalism technique known as 'cold reading'.

Cold reading is a technique employed by mentalists and charlatans (and by charlatan I refer to psychics, mediums, fortune tellers or anyone that claims false abilities) that is used to give the illusion that the person has some form of super natural power.

Cold reading is basically the ability to analyse a person's behaviour, speech and body language in order to get an idea about a person's life, personality, their past, and what they may currently be thinking.

The Feeling of Intuition

Have you ever gotten that gut feeling that you just knew something, even though there was no real reasoning as to why? Were you correct in your presumption? Many of us occasionally get "gut feelings", which is basically an emotional response we make to something without any form of verifiable evidence.

The reason that these feelings are often correct isn't because we have any form of mystical power, it's because our subconscious learns so much that our conscious isn't aware of, and occasionally it tells our consciousness things that we don't know.

Did you know the last time you walked down the road your subconscious absorbed many things that you weren't aware of? The colour of various cars, even their numberplates, would have seeped deeply into your subconscious mind. If I asked you to try and recite some car numberplates to me, you would think such a feat would be impossible. If I placed you under hypnosis however and brought out your subconscious thoughts, you'd be incredibly surprised as to what was possible.

Sometimes our subconscious associates certain things together. If for example you slip whenever you see a yellow "Wet Floor" sign on the ground, then your subconscious will associate that sign with slipping. The next time you see a yellow "Wet Floor" sign you'll get a "gut feeling" that you'll slip,

3 de 12

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so you make sure that you walk on the floor extra cautiously. This subconscious association doesn't begin nor end with wet floor signs. Just about every interaction we have is associated with something in our subconscious.

This is how we get those feelings of intuition, those feelings where we 'just know' certain things, or have a 'bad feeling' about something, even if that feeling can't be justified. If we're able to identify our own subconscious associations, then we'll also be able to identify many subconscious associations that other people have.

The funny thing is, is that all humans have very similar subconscious associations. We all know that jumping from a tall building would be a very bad thing to do, as we've associated height with danger. We also know that if we approach a stranger and just start talking about ourselves then the stranger is going to grow bored and disinterested in us. We learn that by showing an interest in another person, they'll be more likely to respond to us positively and enjoy our company.

People can generally be divided into two personality types – introverted and extroverted. Very few people are at one complete extreme or the other, most of us are somewhere inbetween.

Now if you are an introvert, and speak with a fellow introvert, then you're going to naturally have a lot in common with them. Establishing rapport with the person will be easier, and you'll have a vague idea what their likes and dislikes are before you've even spoken to them. Now then, imagine if you studied your own life and conducted extensive self reflection, and used that as a way of trying to identify how other people, who had similar traits to you, behaved? If you found someone that seemed just like you, odds would be that they shared your same subconscious thoughts and desires.

What about for people that were different to you? How could you learn about their subconscious thoughts and desires? Quite simply, if you learn everything there is to know about one particular type of person, then anyone that displays similar characteristics to that person will most likely also think and behave in a similar way.

So by creating a portfolio of people you know incredibly well, you'll be able to identify similar people in day to day life, and relay to them aspects about their life that they haven't told you. With practice, you'll be surprised how successful you can become at telling a stranger things about themselves that they wouldn't even reveal to their own family.

4 de 12

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All introverts have a lot in common, just like all extroverts have a lot in common. What we're going to do is examine each personality type and just see what we can know about a person based off their personality type alone. Remember, the examples listed here are extremes at both ends. Whilst some introverts will display introvert-like traits, it doesn't mean that they'll meet all the characteristics of an introvert. The same rule applies for extroverts.

The Introvert

An introvert is someone who is typically more absorbed and focused on their own thoughts and emotions than they are with the outside world. Whilst the introvert can socialise, they usually prefer to be alone, and find social interactions with anyone but close friends and family to be draining. Introverts will normally keep to themselves, however may be a lot more expressive on the internet than they would otherwise be in real life.

If you've identified someone to be an introvert, they will usually have the following characteristics -

- Are quite artistic in their words, thoughts and beliefs
- Prefer not to socialise with large groups of people in real life
- Prefer only to socialise with close friends and family
- Dislike being the centre of attention
- Are self conscious and self aware
- Are very critical of themselves, thinking they 'could have done better' in an encounter
- Feel more comfortable being alone
- Are highly creative and imaginative

Now with these characteristics in mind, we'll be able to convince someone, through cold reading, that we somehow have a 'mind reading insight' into their lives.

We begin by probing with rough generalisations about the person and their beliefs. We don't want to become too specific immediately, because not all of the above criteria will apply to every introvert. Indeed, some introverts may be very sociable people, so we must generalise before we start becoming specific. If the person responds positively to our generalisations, then we become more and more specific.

5 de 12

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An example of a generalisation would be - "It seems you're a little critical of yourself at times". Now a generalisation like that is very rarely incorrect since all of us are critical of ourselves at some time or another. Whether this is rarely or frequently doesn't matter.

Now we look how the person responds to the generalisation. There are usually three types of responses – A negative response, a neutral response, and a positive response.

An example of a negative response would be -

"Hmm, on the odd occasion". With a response like this, the person doesn't seem that focused on being critical of themselves, so you shouldn't enquire about this characteristic any further. Now it's important to realise that you haven't lost any of your 'abilities' in the eye of the person you're speaking to, since you haven't said anything that's incorrect. This is why it's important to make broad generalisations to begin with.

An example of a neutral response would be -

"Yea, maybe". This could mean one of two things. It could mean that the person is very self critical of themselves, however they don't want to mention it to you since they don't feel comfortable doing so, or it could mean that they are only occasionally self critical. With a neutral response you will want to probe with another generalisation to do with being self critical. Don't make a direct statement just yet, but keep the option open.

An example of a positive response would be -

"Yea.. that's right". This is a positive response because the person has directly confirmed the generalisation. If you received a response like this you'd know to explore the 'self critical' aspect of the person further.

Now with the above example, all you're doing is probing the person through a generalisation. You're trying to fish to see whether this particular introvert characteristic applies to them or not. After you make a few generalisations about different characteristics, you'll begin to develop a rough idea which characteristics do in fact apply to the person and which ones don't. It's at this stage that you can start making more direct statements about the characteristics that do apply to them.

If the person gave me a positive response to my statement by replying with

6 de 12

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“Yea.. that's right”, I could then move on to a direct statement about being self critical, which could be as follows -

“I can see that you're always thinking about how others will perceive you, you're always self conscious in a crowded setting and sometimes find it difficult to relax. You're aware that you worry too much, and others may have even told you that in the past, however you still can't help it. This anxiousness however is a form of humbleness, and that's one of the things your friends like about you”.

The reaction you get from saying something like this is extraordinary. Notice that although I've made very direct statements about the person, everything I've said is simply related to someone who is typically a self critical person. A self critical person will always be self conscious of how they look, how they're acting, and will portray this worry through their body language.

Now I could be wrong about the “and others may have even told you that in the past...” part of the sentence, so notice that I carefully included the word *may*. I put the word *may* in there so that if I'm wrong about that small statement, I can easily backtrack from it. The rest of the statement however would almost definitely be true for a person that's self critical.

Now depending upon how the person responds, I may delve even deeper into the 'self conscious/self critical' portion of their lives, or explore another introverted characteristic.

This is where I like to use what's called the 'direct question'. It's a question which is also sort of like a statement, but can be interpreted as either depending upon the circumstance.

A direct question I would now use would be “So, do you ever feel anxious when others are observing you, as if you're being judged?”. Now if the person replied “No” then I could simply reply with “I didn't think so, you don't seem to be effected when others observe you, but later on you tend to self reflect a little”. Since almost anyone that is self critical and introvert likes to self reflect, this statement will almost certainly gain a positive response, and it diverts the attention from my question. It turns the question into a positive.

Now if the answer to the question was a “Yes”, then I can make it seem like the question was a statement. I can then go on to say “Yes, I thought so. You seem to let what others think of you effect you quite deeply at times”.

7 de 12

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Notice how my direct question cannot be wrong? It can't be perceived as being wrong, because if it is wrong, then I turn it into a positive anyway. And if it's right, I simply elaborate on it further. This gives the illusion that I'm somehow reading into the person's inner thoughts, when all I'm doing is simply playing with words. Psychics will use the same technique.

So the process then in order to truly amaze people with cold reading, is as follows -

Make generalised statement → If response is positive → Ask/make a direct question/statement.

→ If response is neutral → Ask generalised question about same topic.

→ If response is negative – Ask generalised question on different topic.

You're trying to probe each one of the person's characteristics in order to see which ones apply to them and which ones don't. Once you've created a list of which characteristics do apply to them, you can really start to make accurate predictions about the person through the use of direct questions and statements.

The Extrovert

An extrovert is someone who prefers to divert their energy in an outgoing manner. They don't focus on themselves as much as an introvert does, and they see little point in pondering ideas by themselves for prolonged periods of time. If they have an idea, they'd prefer sharing it with another person or group of people in order to gain feedback. They gain their energy by speaking with other people in interpersonal settings, and always look for acceptance within a group. They tend to be more optimistic about things, and will try and make light of bad situations in order to maintain a positive atmosphere.

The characteristics of an extrovert would typically be as follows -

- Enjoys interacting with other people in a straight-forward, direct manner
- Is not so much an artistic thinker, is more of a practical thinker
- Doesn't follow strict formalities in a conversation
- Views conversation as a way to gain critical feedback for ideas
- Is expressive when in a group setting

8 de 12

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- Enjoys being the centre of attention when the energy is there
- Enjoys meeting new people
- Is unable to function by themselves for prolonged periods of time
- Pictures themselves as more of a leader
- Does the best to enjoy themselves whatever the situation

So, let's say we've identified someone to be an extrovert, and we want to do some cold reading on them. The process of cold reading an extrovert is exactly the same as an introvert, the only thing that changes are the characteristics.

The guideline we follow is still –

Make generalised statement → Analyse Answer → Direct statement or generalised question

(depending upon answer)

So let's begin probing the extrovert with a generalised statement - "I sense that you're a more outgoing person, you enjoy being in a good crowd". Now since this is quite a general statement, it could apply to anyone that shows any degree of extrovertism. If for whatever reason the person says "No, I don't like being in crowds", then we could always say "I said you like being in a good crowd, meaning with your family or friends" - which would apply to anyone. Although we didn't mean family or friends initially, we pretend we did if it goes wrong. We must always give ourselves a naturally sounding backup plan for a generalised statement in case it does go wrong. If however you've successfully identified the person to be an extrovert, it's highly unlikely they'd flat out say that you were wrong.

Now, a realistic answer that the introvert may give could include one of the following -

A negative response: "Sort of, only with people I know though".

This response shows that the extrovert only likes a crowded setting with people they know. Since we're trying to identify whether they're outgoing people even with strangers, then an answer like this would indicate that they most likely weren't. We'd therefore abandon enquiring into this characteristic any further, and enquire about another characteristic instead.

A neutral response: "Well, if I get on well with the people, yea".

9 de 12

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This response could be taken as one of two ways. It could mean that the extrovert only enjoys a crowded setting with people he or she already knows, or it could mean that they enjoy a crowded setting even with complete strangers, so long as they're good company. Since extroverts tend to speak more directly and less inferred, the later would most likely be true, however we can't say for certain. You'd need to make another generalised statement about speaking in a crowd and see how they'd react to that in order to see whether they'd give you a more positive or negative response.

A positive response: "Yea, I always enjoy speaking with people".

A response such as this clearly indicates that the person enjoys a crowded setting. From this we can also conclude that the extrovert most likely 'views conversation as a way to gain critical feedback for ideas', since people that enjoy talking with other people will often be more open to a friendly debate.

If the positive answer was given, we could then move on to a direct statement -

"I can see that you enjoy openly socialising with fun people even if you haven't met them before. You're also not afraid to go up to a stranger and introduce yourself if you believe they look like an alright person. In fact you view conversation itself as the perfect way to express any ideas you have and give other people critical feedback on theirs. You don't like to sit down by yourself and think about things too much, you'd much prefer to share your ideas with other people and get their input. I can see that you gain a lot of energy from being around others".

This is a very direct statement and delves into the 'Is expressive when in a group setting' characteristic. Notice I've slightly touched on the 'Enjoys meeting new people' characteristic, since that is heavily related to interacting with other people, but I've also given myself an escape option just in case that is incorrect, I've said 'if you believe they look like an alright person.' This ensures I'm not left out in the open too much. Everything else about speaking with other people and sharing ideas I have said with confidence however.

I could now look at the characteristic - 'Enjoys meeting new people' as another characteristic I could make a direct statement about, depending upon the reply I'm given. If the person replied "Wow, that's amazing, that's 100% correct", then I'd realise I could delve further into every aspect of my direct statement. If they replied "very impressive, that's pretty accurate", then there could be something that wasn't entirely true, so I should be cautious before making more direct statements about the additional characteristics.

10 de 12

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With practice of the above techniques I can assure you that people will think that you're some sort of mind-reading psychic. I do trust however that you won't take advantage of anyone. Always come clean with your intentions and at the end of the day if someone questions you, *don't* try and pass yourself off as having any sort of super natural ability.

Be a mentalist, not a charlatan.

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