



# Think Like a Shrink: 100 Principles for Seeing Deeply into Yourself and Others

By Dr. Emanuel Rosen

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## A Companion for the Uncouched

Based on a highly regarded article in *Psychology Today* that has been reprinted worldwide, *Think Like a Shrink* is a personality primer that refines years of psychiatric training into 100 principles. Here you will quickly learn to understand what motivates your boss, your spouse, your parents -- and yourself.

Incorporating the most basic fundamentals that drive the human personality, these principles are short, clear, and simple, but not simplistic. They include enlightening observations and real eye-openers, such as:

- Some people never forgive a favor.
- In any marriage, there can only be one number one.
- Too much love may mean hate; too much hate may mean love.
- Successful neuroses help people fail.
- Electra and Oedipus keep psychiatrists in business.

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### Editorial Review

Review

Theodore I. Rubin, M.D.

author of *Compassion and Self-Hate*

Always interesting, practical, and accessible, these insights are delivered in plain English.

Constance Dalenberg, Ph.D.

Director, Trauma Research Institute, and author of *Countertransference and the Treatment of Trauma*

In this honest and refreshing volume, Dr. Rosen offers the reader a series of catalysts to self-understanding and self-acceptance. A unique contribution to the field.

Calvin A. Colarusso, M.D.

Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, University of California at San Diego

Dr. Rosen has distilled the essence of clinical psychiatry and developmental theory in this most outstanding book....Of great value to those who wish to better understand themselves and those they love.

From the Author

Winner First Place Annual Book Award Psychology/Self-Help Category San Diego Magazine 2002 Winner First Place Menninger Alumni Writing Competition 2002 in its category Excerpted in Self Magazine piece on Best Self Help Advice of All Time, 2002

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### **From Part One: The Big Picture**

A Human Is a Human Is a Human

Bill Gates and an Aborigine have a lot in common. They may not hanker after the same clothes, but we can be sure that their primal desires are identical. They both want sustenance. They both want sexual gratification. They both want security. They both want respect. And they both want love.

So what if one may flaunt khakis and the other a loincloth? Irrelevant, a mere expression of cultural bias. Social mores, spiritual beliefs, and priorities vary from culture to culture, and even within the same countries, depending on upbringing and peer expectation. Even in our melting pot of a country, we see great differences in expression and lifestyle between people of different backgrounds and generations.

Nonetheless, distilled down, these discrepancies are but different expressions of the same primal tendencies, hard wired into our genes for the grander purpose of survival, and bearing greatly on our emotional health. You may believe that your son, your daughter, your father, your employer, and so forth are nothing like you.

But look deeper. You'll see that though the methods may be different, the needs are the same. Recognizing common needs is a first step toward cultivating more tolerant attitudes about differences, and happily, in terms of therapy, this commonality broadens human understanding.

### Fantasies Rule

As often as we are all admonished to get a grip on reality, the echo of desire irrepressibly jars, shaking the foundation right out from under real life. And why not? Reality is so much more difficult to control than a confection over which we, and we alone, have total creative tyranny. Fantasy makes a great retreat, or if not "great," at least familiar.

Everyone has fantasies. These can be trivial or all-encompassing. Either way, the greater the distance between the fantasy and the reality, the more arduous the psychological task. A shrink or loved one can only help a deluded patient accept reality mentally. However, no one, no how, can excise the emotional longing that fuels and will continue to fuel escapist tendencies. The most skillful therapists help to narrow the chasm between the perceived want and achievable goals, and often it is the former that needs the most attention.

All fantasies have a source. With encouragement, daytrippers will sometimes reveal the associations they make with their fantasies. A man who would take six women to bed at once might want to feel more manly. Or the woman whose desire is a 10,000-square-foot chateau complete with turrets may have an exaggerated need for security. Find out *why* they evoke those fantasies and you'll be learning what makes them tick.

Fantasies can be so vivid that if an event shatters one, it can precipitate an emotional crisis, even if the individual is unaware or only dimly aware of its existence. In the case of a fear-based fantasy, for example, a person might get severely depressed on entering law school or on getting married before their older sibling if he or she has the unconscious fantasy that besting the sibling will lead to annihilation. But a fantasy meltdown may eventually lead sufferers to grounding their ideas in reality.

Identifying the anxiety at the source of the fantasy -- which usually has its origin in childhood -- is a first step toward mitigating its influence. Based on a more thorough understanding of why they fantasize, dreamers can design more achievable goals. Small steps, taken incrementally, will lead them to more satisfying lives. They may even reach to achieve their pie in the sky, instead of just thinking about it.

### The Unconscious Mind Is a Constant, Invisible Influence

It's not that there is no free will. But there is too often unrecognized forces guiding our reactions, both inconsequential and life-altering.

I once argued with my late psychiatrist father, "The very word *unconscious* suggests that we are unaware of it, and therefore it does not matter."

He replied simply, "Some are more unaware of it than others."

It is just this lack of awareness that makes us emotionally stupid.

As actors and actresses in our own private play, only infrequently do we recognize that our unconscious is subtly yanking the strings. We do this, we do that, all the while imagining that we are just acting spontaneously to what life serves up. The more neurotic we are, the less awareness we have of what the script actually says, of how much of our circumstances are due to our unconscious. Without awareness, we get stuck in patterns that become painfully familiar, but that we nevertheless repeat over and again.

Eventually, the unconscious seems to raise its own alert in the form of emotional suffering. Frequent overblown reactions are a sign. Repeated painful outcomes that run against conscious intent are another. The unconscious is trying to become more conscious!

By profession, shrinks commit to the healing power of "increased awareness," but it is slow going. Anyone's insight regarding his or her unconscious only begins the therapeutic process. It is like acquiring a brand-new sense in tiny increments. Imagine the fog of unawareness thinning slightly. The freshly conscious person sees the dim outline of an unknown shape (which is actually their own thought process). Just then the fog thickens again, and not until it clears for a second time will the glimmer reoccur. And so forth.

Even more difficult and requiring months and sometimes years of practice is the glacial "working through" phase that will make hitherto unconscious patterns conscious, then gradually transform choices into more nourishing ones.

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