

Cursed by knowledge

Style guides aren't known for being riveting reads, but Pinker's *The Sense of Style* isn't just a style guide but a long hard look at the problems that come with academic writing through the lens of cognitive psychology.

I was initially hesitant when asked to write a review of a book about good writing. The adage of Murphy's law – an intentional misspelling of Murphy's law – states: If you write anything criticising editing or proofreading, there will be a fault of some kind in what you have written. If these words are anything to go by, then criticising a book on academic style sounds like a dangerous task. Thankfully I found it difficult to fault Pinker's 'thinking person's guide to writing in the 21st century', which lays out his roadmap towards good writing.

In 1990 Elizabeth Newton conducted an experiment in which students were asked to tap the rhythm of songs such as 'Silent Night' and 'Baa Baa Black Sheep' using their fingers. They were then asked to guess what percentage of listeners would be able to guess the song they had tapped. The tappers estimated that on average 50 per cent of the listeners would guess the song they were listening to. In reality, participants who listened to their tapping could only guess 2.5 per cent of the songs. The three hits in 120 tries that the listeners correctly guessed, was outside the entire range of the tappers' estimates. The results of Newton's study illustrate how bad we humans are at predicting what is going on in another's head and understanding how others interpret our intentions, when we know something that they do not.

This is the Curse of Knowledge, which Pinker argues is the central reason for the appallingly opaque standard of communication that makes up much of academic writing. If you're thinking, 'I've heard that one before', that's because the Curse of Knowledge or versions of it have come under many names: lack of a theory of mind, mind-blindness, ego-centralism, hindsight bias, false consensus, illusory transparency, to name a few.

In Pinker's eyes, the problem of bad academic writing is not typically due to a desire to bamboozle the reader or prove the author is serious. Pinker writes: 'It simply doesn't occur to the writer that her readers don't know what she knows – that they haven't mastered the missing steps that seem too obvious to mention, have no way to visualize a scene that to her is as clear as day. And she doesn't bother to explain the jargon, or spell out the logic, or supply the necessary detail.' This seems generous to many academics who appear to write badly for the reasons Pinker throws out, but Pinker's explanation at the very least provides an explanation for the conundrum that some of the most influential academics appear to possess some of the worst writing skills.



The Sense of Style:
The Thinking Person's
Guide to Writing in the
21st Century
Steven Pinker

Pinker partially explains the Curse of Knowledge through the phenomenon of chunking. To process information we store it in chunks, and communication requires whoever we are communicating with to be able to decode these chunks of information. If our reader doesn't possess the same chunks that we are using to communicate, then we might as well be speaking in gobbledegook. The solution seems straightforward – we must go the extra mile and break down our chunks so that they match the repertoire of our audience. If only things were so simple. Pinker explains that a reason academics find this so difficult is the fear that 'if our readers do know the lingo, we might be insulting their intelligence by spelling it out' and that we would prefer to 'run the risk of confusing them while at least appearing to be sophisticated than take a chance at belaboring the obvious while striking them as naive or condescending'. According to Pinker we need to recognise that we often overestimate our audience's understanding of the abstract language we use.

Another concept Pinker borrows from cognitive psychology to explain the Curse of Knowledge is functional fixity. In a classic experiment participants are given a candle, a book of matches and a box of thumbtacks and asked to attach the candle to the wall without it dripping on the floor. Participants typically fail to realise that the box of thumbtacks could be tacked to the wall and used to hold the candle, they fail to see that objects can have uses other than their intended function. According to Pinker, academics face the same problem, 'expertise can make our thoughts more idiosyncratic and thus harder to share: as we become familiar with something, we think about it more in terms of the use we put it to and less in terms of what it looks like and what it is made of'.

Another related reason academic writing can be so troublesome is a 'dangerous weapon called nominalization: making something into a noun'. Pinker cites as an example of functional fixity the following sentence from the methods section of a research paper: 'Participants read assertions whose veracity was either affirmed or denied by the subsequent presentation of an assessment word.' Pinker translates this as: 'We presented participants with a sentence, followed by the word TRUE or FALSE.' It is notable that Pinker's plain English translation uses fewer words than the version from the paper, but also manages to be far less cognitively taxing. Pinker uses this example to demonstrate how functional fixity can explain bad writing – the academic uses the term 'assessment word' because 'that's why he put it there' – but this information isn't useful to the reader, nor is it any more precise, we'd much rather be spoken to in plain English, but this isn't how we think. The skill of good writing is the ability to adapt the language we use when we process information into language that can be easily understood by others.

| Allen Lane; 2014; Hb £20.00

Reviewed by Neurobonkers who is a freelance science writer and blogger (neurobonkers.com)



Unwarranted conclusions

Trust Me, I'm a Doctor
BBC Two

Seeking to reduce confusion in the mixed health messages provided in today's media, this series uses doctor-hosted experiments to provide answers to common health questions. Amongst a host of other items in this episode (Series 2, Episode 3) was something of particular interest to me as a physical activity researcher. Can your weekly household chores help you 'cheat' your way to the recommended 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) a week in adults? Activity monitors were worn by a sample of eight participants 'of a range of shapes and sizes' whilst completing various chores on a cross-sectional basis. Tasks such as mopping, Hoovering, car washing and mowing were found to reach the metabolic rate classified as target MVPA. Participants' self-reported time performing these weekly tasks suggest that they can indeed reach the weekly requirement largely through chores alone – hurrah! Doing the chores you 'hate' is celebrated as a great alternative to the gym, before a swift transition to the next item.

I was left feeling frustrated and angry at such a premature conclusion. Given a well-documented activity crisis in the UK and years of hard work dedicated to promoting activity, this brief item seemed hugely



dismissive. Individuals watching this may well increase their self-efficacy for activity, in becoming aware of their daily tasks as being physically active. However, the overarching theme common in media and society persists here: activity is a chore and something to be avoided. Although supposedly aiming to clarify messy health media for consumers, I fear this item has done the opposite. Despite news items regularly promoting the positive effects of exercise on health and well-being, this was promoting daily tasks alone as sufficient. The weak cross-sectional evidence was

unwisely described to have unwarranted conclusions extending far beyond its minute sample. Physical activity is fun and beneficial for the body and mind and should be promoted as such, not as a chore. Programmes advertised as science-based such as these, have a responsibility to present well-validated research and prevent premature conclusions in their narrative and for their viewers.

I Reviewed by Emma Norris who is a PhD student at University College London and Associate Editor (Reviews)



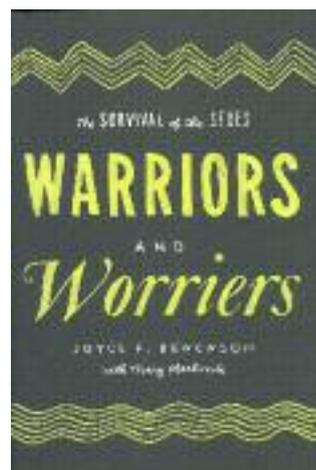
At ease, at last?

Warriors and Worriers: The Survival of the Sexes
Joyce F. Benenson

This book turns a well-held (and widely researched) belief completely on its head. Professor Benenson courageously asserts a new notion: women are more competitive than men while men are more sociable than women. While not attempting to draw new battle lines between the sexes, Benenson's theories in *Warriors and Worriers* instead suggest how the genders could begin easing any friction between their emotional behaviours.

Historically, the accepted academic interpretation of

human evolution describes males travelling out into the wilderness alone to hunt for food while females are safely ensconced together around camp fires, gathering berries from bushes, awaiting their return. However, Benenson's observations of survival experiences in Uganda, as well as three decades spent studying children and chimpanzees, offer new insight into how males and females think, emote and behave. By forming socially cooperative ingroups males keep outgroups out (warrior enemies) while, conversely,



females attempt to protect their children and parents and compete for mates by rejecting other females (worrisome competition). Suggesting that gender behaviour evolves to prevent death.

Reflecting on the connection

between Benenson's research and today's society, there appears an all-too-familiar resonance to it. Could this explain why women can often experience the emotional 'green-eyed-monster' and possibly how men are often found in 'packs' in bars, on battlefields and around balls (of the sporting kind)? Initially, this concept seems hard to grasp, however, much of Benenson's thorough research appears to confirm the claims made and it proves insightful reading for therapists counselling challenging couples.

I Oxford University Press; 2014; Hb £16.99

Reviewed by Kaye Bewley who is a psychotherapist working for the British Army

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Simple take-home messages



Professor Stuart Biddle: Myth-busting Sports Medicine
BMJ Podcasts

As a landmark figure in physical activity psychology, Professor Stuart Biddle outlines some issues and recommendations for behaviour change in physical activity (PA) and sedentary behaviour (SB) in this podcast.

Biddle argues that a public health approach is required, addressing the obesogenic environment from multiple angles and modifying lifestyles at a population level. This is a huge challenge, especially when considering the multifaceted influences on individual activity choice.

Discussion is directed to motivation in activity, with three key myths being addressed. First, Biddle argues that motivation is not just about quantity – being more motivated doesn't necessarily mean you will start running regularly. More important and effective is the quality of this motivation:

having a focus on a specific activity and goal.

Second, the importance of recognising different types of motivations is described. More awareness is arguably needed of the differences between extrinsic (e.g. 'I ought to run to meet the 150 minutes recommended weekly level) and intrinsic (e.g. 'I want to run as I enjoy it) motivational categories. Encouraging individuals to shift from external to internal motivational focuses provides greater, longer-lasting activity change.

Finally, the myth of high willpower levels being sufficient to engage individuals in activity and structured exercise is tackled. Instead, reflecting on 'Nudge' theory, Biddle describes how we must work towards developing environments where activity is easier and more pleasurable: providing healthier options without individuals

having to make conscious decisions on their uptake.

Examples include cycle hire schemes such as London's 'Boris' Bikes: making cycling facilities available, accessible and appealing to the general public.

The podcast ends with two simple methods for individuals to improve their activity behaviours. First, Biddle stresses self-monitoring of your own sitting and moving behaviours as a useful start, combined with goal-setting and giving yourself feedback on your actions; for example, assessing how long you spend sitting at work and developing goals to go for walking or stair-climbing breaks at regular intervals. Second, he advises that individuals should focus on activities most realistic and attractive to them. It is simply no good to hold hugely intensive or



unappealing exercises on a pedestal, as this will only serve to demotivate individuals.

These simple take-home messages are something that I feel should be stressed more in physical activity interventions: the need for fun, variety and relevance for the target population. Although the podcast's title is somewhat misleading, focusing on public health rather than sports *per se*, I really recommend this great overview of current research priorities in physical activity.

ⓘ <http://journals.bmj.com/site/podcasts>
Reviewed by Emma Norris
who is a PhD Student at University College London and Associate Editor (Reviews)



A revelation

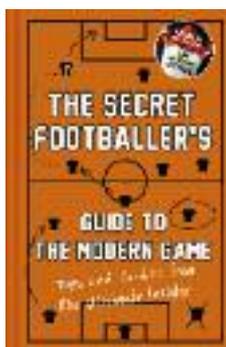
The Secret Footballer's Guide to the Modern Game: Tips and Tactics from the Ultimate Insider
The Secret Footballer

Of the 95 per cent of people who love football, only 2 per cent understand it. One of my best friends is a complete fan, sees everything, knows everything. But he has no idea... it's complicated. – Xavi

This book, written by an anonymous professional footballer, begins with that quote from the legendary Barcelona playmaker. (Incidentally, anybody who thinks all footballers are thick should watch Xavi play, or read this interview with him – tinyurl.com/o6hwpzx). And he's right... I have played football for more than 30 years, I currently manage my son's under-11s team, and yet my overwhelming realisation on reading these 'tips and tactics from the ultimate insider' is just how little I know about the game.

I tackled this book in around 90 minutes, and it hit the net numerous times... I picked up some really useful fitness drills, nodded vigorously in agreement over what is wrong with England and the FA, and learned loads about fashions and formations in football. Despite thousands of hours over the years playing the game, or reading and talking about it, a lot of the thinking was completely new to me.

But one area where *The Secret Footballer* (TSF) and I are talking



the same language concerns the importance of the mental side of the modern game. Even with my fledgling footballers, I am convinced that if I can just 'get inside their heads', the performances will come. And there has been a growing acceptance and use of the discipline in the professional game... we are light years from the 1990s, when the sports psychologist was generally viewed with the same suspicion and disdain as Eileen Drewery, the faith healer Glenn Hoddle brought in to work with the England team. In a chapter dedicated to psychology TSF describes sports psychologists' involvement in the game as 'a revelation', and he writes knowledgeably about David Dunning and Justin Kruger, Stanley Milgram, and more.

Elsewhere the reader can glean plenty of psychological insight into the great managers, the average football fan, and even the corporations and tycoons feeding off the players and the game.

If you're one of the fortunate 2 per cent who understand the game, the book is worth the price for the Dimitar Berbatov anecdote alone. If you're in the 98 per cent who think they understand it, buy this book and think again.

ⓘ *Guardian Books and Faber and Faber; 2014, Hb £12.99*
Reviewed by Dr Jon Sutton, Managing Editor of *The Psychologist*.
See tinyurl.com/kc2vfhp for an exclusive extract from the book.



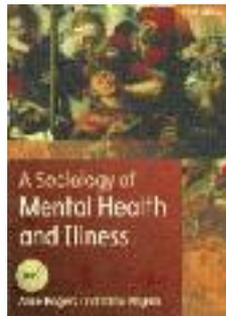
False dichotomies laid bare

A Sociology of Mental Health and Illness (5th edn)
Anne Rogers & David Pilgrim

The fifth edition of Rogers and Pilgrim's *A Sociology of Mental Health and Illness* is a timely contribution to current debates surrounding mental health theory and practice; particularly considering the social, political and economic upheaval that has been ongoing since 2008, its impact on the psychological health of the nation and our ability as practitioners to respond.

Rogers and Pilgrim examine the causes and meanings of mental health and illness using a sociological perspective, pointing a critical finger at, among other things, the machinations of social context, institutions and mental health professionals; the impact of gender, race and life course on mental health; and the often detrimental effects of treatment and attitudes to mental health. In the new preface Rogers and Pilgrim appropriately scupper the aspirations of certainty and definitive accounts, and state that the book 'raises important ethical and political challenges for trainees in "mental health work"' – this does not go far enough, as the book should raise challenges for the qualified practitioner as well. Although the book is not targeted at psychologists specifically, there is no question that the topics covered would resonate with practitioner psychologists of all persuasions.

One weakness of the book is the absence of a



chapter on methodology and research. As explained by the authors, there is a considerable bibliography in this new edition as theories and research in sociology and mental health are constantly revised and evolving. It is strange that there is no critical discussion on the nature of evidence in mental health theory and research, as one would imagine that what is determined to be 'appropriate' evidence is arrived through social consensus, therefore making it sociological. By omitting evidence as an area of critique it is almost as if Rogers and Pilgrim tacitly endorse a correspondence theory of truth with regard to the research they cite, which would not be in keeping with the critical stance taken by the authors in the rest of the book. Perhaps this is something to debate in the sixth edition.

Nevertheless, *A Sociology of Mental Health and Illness* is an excellent introductory textbook; perhaps its greatest contribution is that it lays bare the false dichotomy between sociology and 'psy' disciplines such as psychology. If this book is indeed intended for trainees in mental health work, then the earlier that unhelpful dichotomy is dissolved in their minds the better.

| *Open University Press; 2014; Pb £28.99*
Reviewed by Patrick Larsson who is a counselling psychologist working in the NHS



Gap in the market

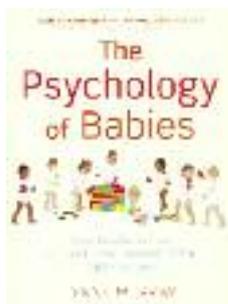
The Psychology of Babies
Lynne Murray

I'm an occupational psychologist – so why am I reviewing this book? Well, I have a 15-month-old baby and was eager to read more about how babies develop. My knowledge of child development is patchy to say the least – there is not much beyond what I remember from my first degree over 20 years ago.

I loved this book – as a mum and as a psychologist. It's very well structured, covering the key areas, and is highly engaging. The points in the text are continually illustrated with picture sequences showing different babies behaving in response to different situations and people, which is invaluable – it definitely brings it alive, and I could easily relate it to my

son's behaviour. It has also given me some ideas about how to support his development more effectively.

Intellectually I found it stimulating, and it made me think about aspects that I could relate to as an occupational psychologist. For example, thinking about how the quality of daycare will be influenced by how staff are treated by their organisation. It also reminded me of the instinctive ways we have of learning – babies are hard-wired to explore things, to be experimental, and to imitate others and look for social reinforcement. Sometimes we



lose that natural curiosity as adults, and certainly some development activities forget about tapping into these natural ways of learning, and

instead try and impose a very unnatural approach.

This book covers a gap in the market – there is a lack of books covering this period of child development – and I would thoroughly recommend it.

| *Robinson; 2014; Pb £16.99*
Reviewed by Emily Hutchinson who is an occupational psychologist at EJH Consulting and Senior Lecturer University of Gloucestershire



Needs working on

WorkOut (app)
Reach Out Ireland

This 'mental fitness' resource, developed by Inspire Australia and the Brain and Mind Research Institute in Sydney, also includes a supplementary iPhone app built by Reach Out Ireland, a mental health organisation for young people. In a nutshell, the WorkOut app involves users completing a series of mental health-related questionnaires and activities in the mental fitness themed areas of 'being practical', 'building confidence', 'taking control' and 'team player'. The app provides feedback based on the users' scores and displays a Life Wheel chart so users can see what areas need to be worked on.

We thought that the app made great use of colour, metaphors and usability. It appeared that the developers of the app favoured clinical health measures such as the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale over positive health measures such as the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire. We felt that vulnerable young people accessing clinical questionnaires may not be the most optimal resource if increasing the well-being of young people is the general goal of the app. Therefore, we suggest an emphasis on positive measures for future development. Furthermore, limiting the app to iPhone users, and physically using the app in an unsupervised non-therapeutic environment, may decrease the efficacy of this app as a mental health resource. Lastly, we suggest that the developers consider improving the interactivity and enjoyment of the app in order to encourage multiple usages.

| *2014; Free on Apple App Store*
Reviewed by Derek Laffan, Breanna Coyle and Juliette Salmon of the Dún Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology, County Dublin, Ireland



Comedy, melancholy and mental health

Robin Ince's Tears of a Clown
BBC Radio 4

This hour-long programme, examining the relationship between sadness and comedy, is both thoughtful and thought-provoking. Its focus is on stand-up comedians, but its insights go wider to consider the fundamental human conditions of sadness, loss and the use of humour to cope with some of the darker aspects of life.

Ince was inspired to create the documentary after the death of Robin Williams. 'Robin Williams was a very important influence on me, and I happened to be doing a stand-up event about comedy and therapy when I heard Robin Williams had killed himself,' Ince told me. 'I started to mull over the truth, fiction or in-between of the image of the miserable clown.'

'For most of my life, comedy has been one of my main obsessions, and for half of my life I have made a living from it,' said Ince. 'The older I become, the more I wonder why it is what I have always wanted to be and why I can't imagine being anything else.'

Ince doesn't come up with a pat conclusion or a list of psychological research that answers all the questions he raises, and the programme is much richer for this. He uses beautifully selected interview footage from a range of brilliant comedians, talking seriously about comedy as therapy and therapy itself. Ince describes how hard it was to edit the show to an hour with so many thoughtful interviewees: 'Ten minutes before the deadline we were still trying to fit it all in.'

Jo Brand is one of the interviewees, explaining bipolar disorder and extremes of emotion eloquently. Whilst she doesn't think all comedians experience bipolar, she wonders if they go to slightly higher highs and lower lows in mood than many. Psychotherapist Philippa Perry 22 interviewed too, with a lightness of touch but depth of theoretical knowledge. Ince has researched what few psychological studies there have been on comedians and he peppers these in as he goes.

The documentary is fascinating from a psychological perspective, but also from a human perspective, providing an opportunity to think about how deep and dark emotions can fuel creativity. Ince says he is pleased that the documentary has inspired others to talk about melancholy and mental health.

On the use of humour in general, Ince thinks it has many functions, both positive and negative: 'It can be used to confirm our beliefs or it can be used to question them. It can be a valve and it is a release of frustrations. Sometimes it reveals our petty-mindedness and insularity, at others it is a celebration of our empathy and altruism.'

Ince said he often returns to a quote from George Carlin: 'Humour is a low art, but a very potent art.' However you see the use of humour, this documentary is definitely worth a listen.

I Reviewed by Lucy Maddox *who is a clinical psychologist (see @lucy_maddox and <https://psychologymagpie.wordpress.com>)*

Sample titles just in:

The Domesticated Brain Bruce Hood

The Rise Sarah Lewis

G is for Genes Kathryn Asbury & Robert Plomin

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The only way over it, is through it...

The Trauma of Everyday Life
Mark Epstein

Trauma comes in various guises, inflicting people from all walks of life but providing opportunity for positive change. Epstein skilfully combines his knowledge of Buddhism and psychotherapy to explore this phenomenon, emphasising how trauma can be used for the mind's development.

Whilst sparse in descriptions of client work, this book is rich with stories from both the life of the Buddha and Epstein's personal experiences. Through these stories Epstein expertly highlights a key message: pain becomes bearable when we do not run from it. But how does Epstein propose we bear this pain? Through mindfulness we nurture 'a spy consciousness in the corner of the mind' from which we can acknowledge dissociated painful feelings. Epstein teaches us how our mind can learn to hold our distress and how, in the process of doing this, we enhance our ability to relate to ourselves and

others with compassion and connectedness.

Epstein writes with honesty and charm whilst discussing his journey to understanding Buddhism and his frustration in mastering meditation. This provides the reader with reassurance that their own struggle with such practices is not an isolated one. Epstein transports the reader on a philosophical journey, leaving one feeling pensive and enlightened upon its conclusion.

If you are a practitioner seeking to understand how Buddhism may apply to developmental trauma, a trainee wishing to grasp Buddhist principles behind mindfulness (like me), or simply an individual navigating through the 'trauma of everyday life', this book is for you!

I Hay House; 2013; Pb £12.99

Reviewed by Fiona Broderick *who is a trainee clinical psychologist at Staffordshire and Keele Universities*



For a fast-growing profession

What Is Clinical Psychology?
Susan Llewelyn & David Murphy (Eds.)

Clinical psychology is one of the fastest-growing health professions all over the world including Britain. Clinical psychologists were recognised within the NHS for the first time in 1952 and a separate Division of Clinical Psychology was established within the BPS in 1966 (at the moment the Division has approximately 10,000 members). Since 1952 and 1966 the number of people working in the field of clinical psychology has expanded hugely due to success in delivering high-quality and effective clinical services. So it is a relative newcomer to health care compared to the giants of medicine and nursing, but thanks to all developments it claims its own unique contribution as an applied science, drawing on the science of psychology.

The first edition of *What Is Clinical Psychology?* was published in 1987, and since then the number of professionals in the UK has more than quadrupled. The profession has extended into a wide range of new settings and client groups. Therefore the fifth edition since 1987 contains new chapters on new developments while remaining chapters have been significantly updated. By doing so, the content of this book represents a comprehensive and

Creative, empowering



The Therapist's Treasure Chest: Solution-oriented Tips and Tricks for Everyday Practice
Andrea Caby & Filip Caby



Any book that labels itself a treasure chest is setting itself a pretty high bar in my view, but surprisingly, despite weighing in at 319 pages (sans bibliography, references, etc.), this one seems to hit the mark. Of course, opening with a quote from Goethe is always a strong move, but the true sign came when I felt my fingers itching for highlighter pens.

The book starts with a very brief introduction to the models behind the approach before leaping right in to some useful advice for clinicians regardless of theoretical stance. The rest of the book is dedicated to introducing techniques, recommendations for specific clinical issues, and problem solving things that may come up during the course of therapy.

The Therapist's Treasure Chest is aimed at those working in child and adolescent services, and you might have some trouble explaining why you have a box of finger puppets in

supervision if you work outside of these specialities. This being said, a lot of the techniques can be slightly adapted (the authors often comment on these as they along) and it only really becomes rather blatant once you start getting into Part 3 'Indications: What Works Best When?'. It's well structured, and peppered with case studies to further expand on the techniques. Overall, the book encourages a creative, empowering and respectful approach to clinical work and is a useful resource and reference for those who work primarily in other models.

| Norton; 2014; Pb £17.99
Reviewed by Luke Allinson who is a Senior Assistant Psychologist in Long Term Health Conditions, LIFT Psychology Wiltshire

Fascinating and convenient



The Mind is Flat: The Shocking Shallowness of Human Psychology
Future Learn, and the University of Warwick

What a marvellous opportunity – an interesting free psychology course, available to study online at any time of day or night! This was the first MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) that I had studied, and although familiar with distance learning, I found the convenience and interactive nature fascinating.

FutureLearn started free online courses from UK and international universities in the autumn of 2013. Over the last year the number of courses appears to increase exponentially, so take the plunge and try one (www.futurelearn.com/courses/upcoming).

The Mind is Flat (www.futurelearn.com/courses/the-mind-is-flat) was one of the first of the FutureLearn courses and continues to be repeated. Nick Chater, Professor of Behavioural Science at Warwick Business School, leads this course. The main principle, which is elucidated and then argued cogently, is that we make decisions in a surprisingly uninformed manner. Strangely, as a relatively careful individual interested in facts, I found this information surprisingly reassuring and believable. Many concepts described will be well known to psychologists, such as present behaviour is strongly influenced by past behaviour. Yet, it is argued, decisions remain superficial, based on present evidence available and the views of others.

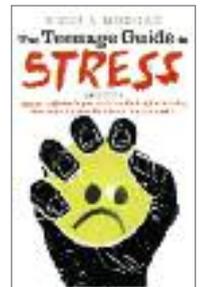
This course covering six weeks is entertaining with a series of short videos or text, with tests, and the opportunity each week to state your views and comment on those of others.

| Reviewed by Kathryn J. Fraser who is a Chartered Psychologist



Positive and reassuring

The Teenage Guide to Stress
Nicola Morgan



Having enjoyed *Blame my Brain: The Amazing Teenage Brain Revealed*, I was excited to read Nicola Morgan's new book on the subject of teenage stress. I was not disappointed. Morgan's writing is clear and engaging, making it an accessible and enjoyable read.

The book is split into three sections; the first describes what stress is and how it affects teenagers specifically. The middle section covers a wide range of issues that teenagers face. The cyberbullying, social media, sleep and exam sections were particularly interesting and informative. Each topic is followed by tips and advice to help with that particular issue.

The third section goes into more detail about stress management strategies teenagers can utilise as well as advice on how to generally look after their mental health.

This book is positive and reassuring and gives teenagers, and the adults who support them, practical strategies to manage stress. Talking about and acknowledging teenage stress and encouraging good mental health is undoubtedly positive as it can stop young people developing more severe difficulties. This book is a fantastic starting point to encourage this and is a useful read for teenagers, parents and those working with teenagers.

| Walker Books; 2014; Pb £7.99
Reviewed by Susanne Litts who is a Primary Mental Health Worker, NHS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service

contemporary account of the profession today. It covers all the major domains of clinical practice ranging from primary care to severe and enduring mental health problems; from clinical psychologists working in forensic settings to psychologists in leadership positions.

The book begins with an overview of professional practice and a clear introduction to the major competencies and theories used by practitioners, while it concludes with a consideration of likely future developments and challenges. In an appendix it also provides guidance on training routes. By doing so, *What Is Clinical Psychology?* is vital reading for anyone teaching, considering, or working alongside the profession of clinical psychology.

| Oxford University Press; 2013; Pb £24.99
Reviewed by Dr Giovanni Timmermans who is a clinical psychologist working in health care in the Netherlands

