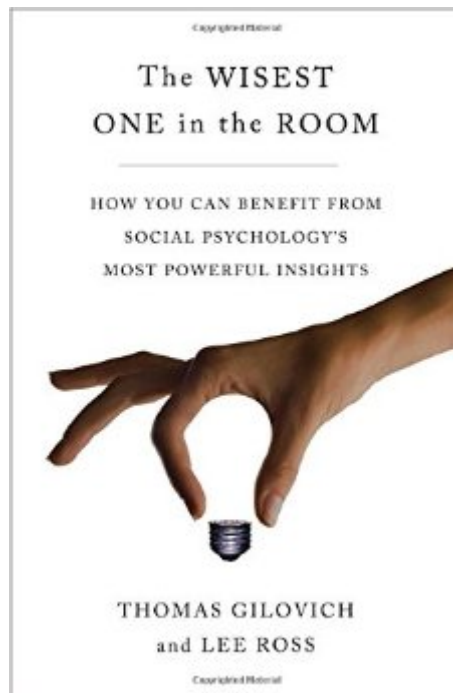


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The Wisest One In The Room: How You Can Benefit From Social Psychology's Most Powerful Insights



Synopsis

Renowned psychologists describe the most useful insights from social psychology that can help make you a wise person: wise about why people behave the way they do, and wise about how to use that knowledge in understanding and influencing the people in your life. When faced with a challenge, we often turn to those we trust for words of wisdom. Friends, relatives, and colleagues: someone with the best advice about how to boost sales, the most useful insights into raising children, or the sharpest take on an ongoing conflict. In *The Wisest One in the Room*, renowned social psychologists Thomas Gilovich and Lee Ross ask: Why? What do these people know? What are the foundations of their wisdom? And, as professors and researchers who specialize in the study of human behavior, they wonder: What general principles of human psychology are they drawing on to reach these conclusions? They begin by noting that wisdom, unlike intelligence, demands some insight into people—their hopes, fears, passions, and drives. It's true for the executive running a Fortune 500 company, the candidate seeking public office, the artist trying to create work that will speak to the ages, or the single parent trying to get a child through the tumultuous adolescent years. To be wise, they maintain, one must be psych-wise. Gilovich and Ross show that to answer any kind of behavioral question, it is essential to understand the details—especially the hidden and subtle details—of the situational forces acting upon us. Understanding these forces is the key to becoming wiser in the way we understand the people and events we encounter, and wiser in the way we deal with the challenges that are sure to come our way—perhaps even the key to becoming the wisest in the room.

Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Free Press (December 1, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1451677545

ISBN-13: 978-1451677546

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.2 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars See all reviews (23 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #35,741 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #149 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Applied Psychology #198 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Social Psychology & Interactions #429 in Books > Health,

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Of the many definitions proposed for wisdom, perhaps the most intriguing is "seeing beyond illusion." When most people are captivated by illusions, the wisest one in the room sees past them and proposes new solutions. The authors draw on recent research in social psychology, judgement, and decision making to help us become wiser. These insights help us see beyond five classes of compelling illusions that often mislead us. The second part of the book applies these wise perspectives to solving several important real-world problems. These five "pillars of wisdom" are demonstrated with relevant research and clear examples in the first part of the book:

- 1) Illusions of objectivity "Naïve realism is the ubiquitous error of mistaking our perception of the world for an objective assessment of the world. Wise people recognize that their take on reality is only their own perception and not an objective assessment of the world as it actually is. This leads to the false consensus effect" a tendency to project your preferences onto a majority of people. Wise people recognize that bias affects them as much as it does others because most of the mental processes of perception operate automatically without our awareness. Wise people acknowledge their own perspective is no more valid than another's.
- 2) The surprising power of subtle situational influence "Organ donation participation rates are close to 100 percent in countries that require people to opt-out and only about 15 percent in opt-in countries. Wise people know it is important to make the path from good intentions to effective action clear and simple.

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