

Psychology

Second Edition

by Joni E. Johnston, Psy.D.



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Foreword

Wouldn't it be great to be able to understand everything about yourself and others that normally baffles you? Why do you keep overeating if you're trying to lose weight? Why do people procrastinate? Why is your cousin so helplessly depressed? Why did Andrea Yates drown her five beautiful children in the bathtub? Why do humans so inevitably make war? And, perhaps more important, how can we fix our problems? How can we help people suffering from depression or obsessive-compulsive disorder or autism or relationship difficulties? How can we change ourselves so that we can reach our goals and achieve our dreams? Can humans finally learn to live in peace together, and, if so, how can we make this millennia-old fantasy come true?

Psychology is the one and only profession on this planet that's obsessed with these issues. Experimental psychologists conduct research to try to understand why we think and feel and do the things we think and feel and do, and clinical psychologists work with individuals, groups, organizations, and even governments to try to improve the human condition. That's why psychology is important, and that's why it's exciting—because psychologists want to know who we are and how we can be better, and aren't those concerns we all have every day?

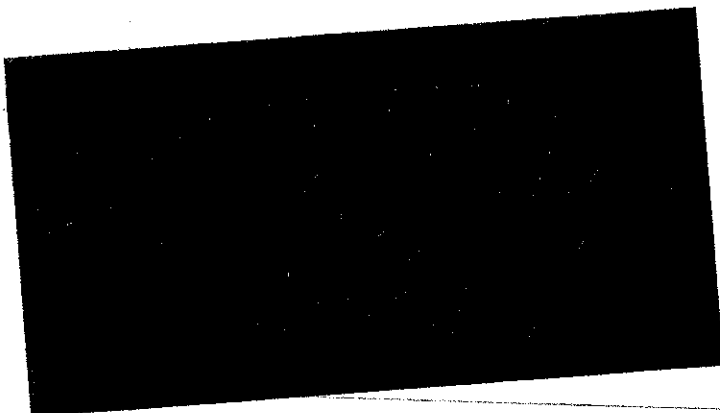
I took my first psychology class more than 30 years ago, a course taught by a neo-Freudian professor with a classic goatee, sparkling eyes, and a fascination with sex. His course was so popular that it had to be held in the campus movie theater. I was spellbound by the strange "case histories" and the personality theories and the fascinating men and women who laid the foundation for this relatively new field. I'm still spellbound, and, given that you've picked up this book, perhaps you are, too—or perhaps you're ready to embark on a fascinating journey.

Complete Idiot's Guides give you the gist, the cream, without drowning you in detail. This one is no exception. You'll find here all of the important topics that are covered in a standard university course on introductory psychology, but without so much to memorize and no homework at all! The topics in this book are even placed in the standard order: You'll first learn a bit about the history of the field (I studied under B. F. Skinner—can you find him?), then learn about the methods psychologists use to try to understand human behavior. You'll learn about learning (yes, one can learn about learning), memory, and perception, and then about personality, mental illness, and even love. You'll start, as all serious students of psychology do, with the small stuff and move, gradually, to the big issues that consume us daily. You'll travel this road smoothly, swiftly, and in style. That's the whole point of the *Complete Idiot's Guides*—to make the journey to learning easy and fun.

You might stop there, or, like me, you might want more. If so, check out some of the resources listed at the end of the book, or sign up for a course in psychology! We need motivated, caring people like you to keep the field moving forward. Our happiness, our productivity, and perhaps even the future of the human race might depend on the success of this essential field.

—Robert Epstein

Robert Epstein, Ph.D., is Editor-in-Chief of *Psychology Today* magazine (www.psychologytoday.com), University Research Professor at the California School of Professional Psychology at Alliant International University (www.alliant.com), and the founder and Director Emeritus of the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies (www.behavior.org). He earned his doctorate in psychology at Harvard University in 1981 and is the author of 11 books, including *The Big Book of Creativity Games*.



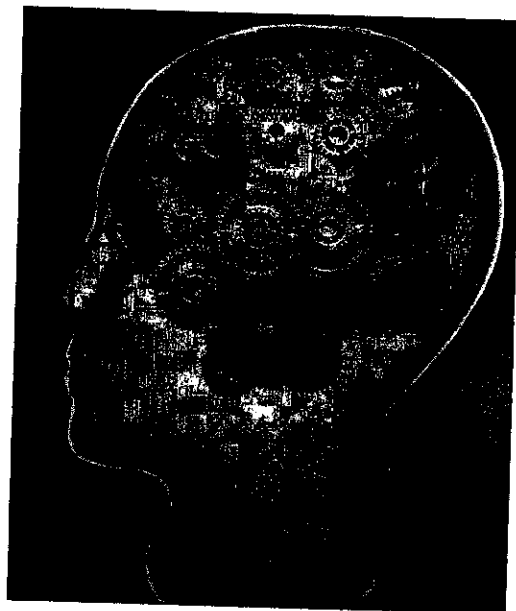
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**—Robert Epstein, Ph.D.,
Editor-in-Chief, *Psychology Today***

Psychology

SECOND EDITION

- ◆ **Thought-provoking explanations** of your brain and thought processes
- ◆ **Helpful insights** into "the blues," mood swings, and other things that get you down
- ◆ **The inside scoop** on the latest analysis and therapy techniques



Joni E. Johnston, Psy.D.

In loving memory of Sara Elizabeth Johnston, and to all the wonderful people in Dothan, Alabama, who helped me say goodbye.

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