

Cracking the Code

The first documented witness to personality was a physician on a small island in the southeastern corner of Greece. In 440 B.C., this freethinking doctor by the name of Hippocrates abandoned the traditional superstitious practices of his contemporaries and conducted detailed observations of his patients prior to reaching a diagnosis. This may not sound very innovative by today's standards, but in a world that relied on mythology to understand illness, Hippocrates' practices were a 180-degree turn from the norm. As he assiduously observed his patients' symptoms and behavior, he was struck by the profound influence of the mind on the body, and came to the conclusion that:

"It's far more important to know what person the disease has than what disease the person has."

Hippocrates was eager to understand the source of his patients' behavior, and he came to identify four distinct traits that surfaced in varying degrees in all people. He called these traits "humors," and—even though he couldn't fathom how they were controlled by the brain—he was the first to recognize what we now know as personality. Hippocrates' theories dominated the field of medicine for nearly two thousand years.

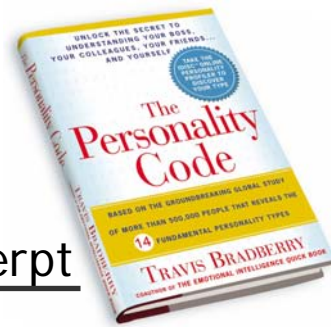
By the time William Marston was born in 1893, the world's grasp of the meaning and classification of personality had yet to evolve. Marston grew up in a small town in rural Massachusetts that was a buggy

ride away from a powerful new movement happening in Cambridge. A Harvard professor, William James, would acquaint a legion of readers during the late 1800s and early 1900s with the new science of psychology. James's immensely popular and aptly named book *The Principles of Psychology* made an assertion that left a lasting impression on Marston, during his own studies at Harvard:

"It's is well for the world that in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again."

To Marston, this suggestion harked back to the notion of permanent dispositions of character witnessed by Hippocrates. By the time Marston received his Ph.D. in psychology from Harvard in 1921, he was well down the path to discovering the essence of personality.

Marston's broad shoulders, prominent chin, and piercing, deeply set eyes gave him an intimidating appearance that could hide his curious and affable demeanor. But Marston was no intellectual pussycat—he had an uncanny ability to find solutions to tough problems and to discern connections between seemingly disparate concepts. True to form, his quest to find the truth about personality began by studying liars and his creativity led to the invention of the polygraph, or the lie detector test. Marston noticed that telling a lie is a surefire way of getting the body to feel emotion. This emotion can be worry, shame, excitement, or almost anything really—it all depends upon why the

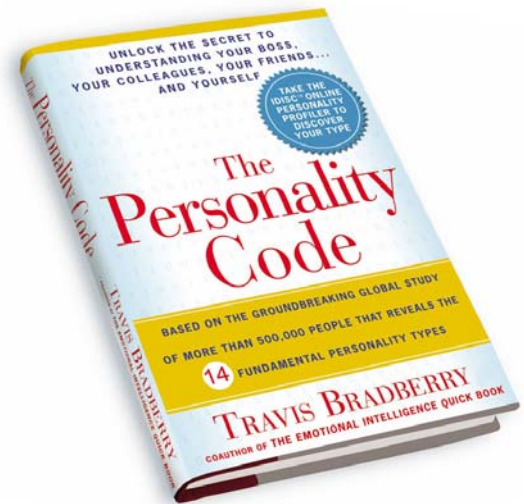


lie is being told. When we speak the truth, it doesn't send the body on a similar emotional roller coaster. Good liars fool us into thinking they're telling the truth by hiding these emotions from our view. Regardless of what they are feeling, they look us in the eye, speak smoothly, and project confidence—just like someone who is speaking the truth. But inside the body of anyone telling a lie—whether it's a little white one or a real whopper—there are physiological responses that accompany these feelings. These responses include changes in blood pressure, breathing, and the skin's ability to conduct electricity, and they're present whether the liar is conscious of them or not. It was Marston's invention of an early form of a simple machine—the polygraph—that showed the subtle physiological changes in the savviest of liars, no matter how skilled they are at getting others to think they are speaking the truth.

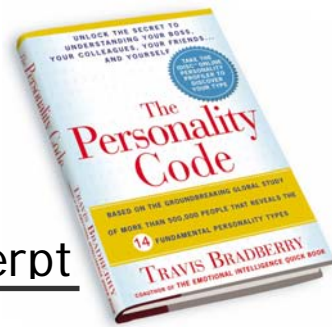
When Marston studied liars, he was actually studying all of us. Lying is a social norm that we use to save people's feelings, avoid conflict, or achieve gain. Even if we don't like to admit it, most people lie on a regular basis. Truth be told, a little more than half of us admit that it's all right to lie in certain situations. Yet, when researchers track people they find that 97% of us don't tell a lie just every once in a while—we tell an average of one whopper per day! Every time one of Marston's subjects told a lie, he stopped to ask questions. He found that different people lied for different reasons, but the same individual would usually lie for the same reason. And this is where Marston saw the connection—people told lies when a situation was very important to them. For most people, telling lies

wasn't a big part of their behavioral repertoire, but the reason for the lie was. Some were motivated to lie to help out a friend, others to smooth a difficult conversation, others to keep themselves in control, and so on. Peoples' motivation for lying revealed something important about their own needs. When Marston followed this clue further, he noticed that the same needs controlled much of what someone would say and do each day—they revealed the predictable tendencies of the human personality.

The Personality Code is a book that explores the vital role of personality in who we are today, and what we will become tomorrow.



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Dr. Bradberry is the president of TalentSmart[®] and a recognized expert in emotional intelligence and personality who speaks regularly on these topics in corporate and public settings.

Dr. Bradberry is the coauthor of the best selling *Emotional Intelligence Quick Book*, as well as the *Preferred Leader Assessment*[™] with Ken Blanchard. His work has been featured by *Newsweek*, *The Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes*, *Fortune*, *Inc.*, *MSNBC*, *The Washington Post*, *Glamour*, *Health*, *Reader's Digest* and major television and radio outlets, including ABC, CBS, NBC, NPR, and FOX.

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