

Psychology: A Very Short Introduction

By Gillian Butler and Freda McManus

Psychology helps us to understand, explain, predict or modify behaviour and what goes on in the mind. It is a huge and fast developing field with many branches and a constantly expanding number of practical applications. This short introduction aims to convey some of the fascination of the subject, and to illustrate the ingenuity and creativity, as well as the scientific application, that goes into the work of psychologists.

Questions for Thought and Discussion

- Is psychology a science?
- Does studying the brain help psychologists to understand the mind?
- Did you have to learn to see, or is it built in?
- What part do expectations play in perception?
- What can we learn from visual illusions? Why do psychologists find them so interesting?
- Would it be useful to be able to remember absolutely everything?
- Does punishing people help them to learn?
- Try not to think about a giraffe. What do you notice? Why does that happen?
- How can we learn to think straight if we are always making mistakes?
- Why is 'stopping to think' such an effort?
- How could you find out whether a baby can count?
- Why is it so difficult to devise culture-fair intelligence tests?
- Is there such a thing as normality? How do we know if we are not normal?
- Is it important to use scientific methods to evaluate a psychological therapy before offering it to people?
- If you were told to do so by someone you respected, would you press a button to give someone severe electric shocks for repeatedly making mistakes on a simple task?
- How have psychologists helped us to understand prejudice?
- What makes people more or less likely to conform to a majority opinion?
- Does 'nature' or 'nurture' have a bigger influence on personality?
- In what ways are the findings of psychologists practically useful?

Other books by Gillian Butler

Gillian Butler, *Overcoming Social Anxiety and Shyness* (Constable & Robinson, 1999)

Gillian Butler and Tony Hope, *Manage Your Mind: The Mental Fitness Guide*, 2nd Ed. (Oxford University Press, 2007)

Gillian Butler, Melanie Fennell and Ann Hackmann, *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Anxiety Disorders* (Guilford Press, 2008)