



Paranoia of Everyday Life: Escaping the Enemy Within

Gerald Alper

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In this insightful exploration of the personal, social, and cultural triggers that give rise to paranoid reactions in our everyday lives, psychotherapist Gerald Alper helps readers to recognize a potentially debilitating problem that is unfortunately all too common in our stress-filled society. Through a series of telling vignettes culled from the experiences of his own patients, Alper shows how ordinary people can lose their way in a world of social alienation where any meaningful sense of community seems to have vanished.

People in the grip of paranoia unwittingly construct a melodramatic, suspense-filled interior world, a baffling maze of plots and counterplots wherein real people are reduced to one-dimensional, cartoon caricatures. From the successful stockbroker who is completely unnerved by what he perceives as a hostile stare-down on the subway train and the accomplished social psychologist who is convinced that the man handing out leaflets in front of her apartment building is targeting her to the many power games that people play in their personal and professional relationships (being withholding, keeping a grudge, payback time, etc.), Alper graphically depicts—with exceptional clarity and depth—the key elements of everyday paranoia. He concludes with a major clinical study of a patient who dramatically personifies the central themes of the book.

In reading Alper's analysis and his revealing examples of paranoia, readers may catch glimpses of themselves and with relief experience the epiphany of Alper's patients: "I was just being paranoid!"

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