

## **BOOK REVIEW**

**WITHOUT CONSCIENCE – the disturbing world of the Psychopaths  
among us by Robert D. Hare, PhD  
The Guilford Press  
(Dr. Hare also co-authored “Snakes in Suits”)**

This is a very disturbing book that exposes a group of people in our midst that are social predators, who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way through life, leaving a broad trail of broken hearts, shattered expectations, **and empty wallets**. It is this last act of the Psychopath that I wish to address in doing this book summary.

As a financial planner since 1970, I have had clients that have been “sold” a bill of goods by some of the nicest people you could ever meet. They display great manners, look good and act in the most sincere manner possible while their hands are busy picking dollars from your pocket. I have had clients lose anywhere from \$5000 to \$1. 3 million to people who will sit around your kitchen table and tell you such a great story that you willingly will write a cheque in their name to be reinvested. (Of course you will make you a handsome profit in return?) These victims of financial fraud are not stupid people. They simply have been conned, manipulated and deceived by very cunning predators.

This summary will provide you with some of the tools to combat this kind of person. It will be a blend of the Author, Dr. Hare’s tools and some of my own that I have developed over the years to protect my clients from these unsavory people called Psychopaths.

## How do you recognize a Psychopath?

- For the lay person, this is very difficult. In job interviews they will lie very convincingly and soon be everybody's favorite employee.
- They exude charm, confidence and determination – but it may seem too good to be true.
- They will work themselves into high powered positions or projects.
- They soon become controlling, abusive towards other employees, will blame others and start pushing the envelope to achieve their goals.
- It will be later revealed that he/she has been destroying the management of the organization while pushing their way to the top.
- Page 34 of the book lists the key symptoms of Psychopathy. Dr. Hare lists the emotional, interpersonal and their social deviances. Scary!
- Dr. Hare stresses that we should not assume that an individual is a psychopath simply because of the context in which he or she is portrayed in this book. With this in mind, I will be very careful to focus only on areas of **my** expertise in doing this summary. Defensive strategies in financial planning.

### A Survival Guide

The following are tips that can be used in dealing with **anyone** that you are trusting with your hard earned dollars. Remember, if you knew you were dealing with a psychopath, you would not deal with them. They are masters of deception and without conscience. They lack responsibility and love the excitement of doing the deal.

1. **Know what you are dealing with** – a good psychopath can play a concerto on anyone's heartstrings. Understand the nature of these manipulators. **Google psychopath** for an intriguing list of traits of these human predators. In financial planning, do your research on the investment you are considering so that you can ask very direct questions. Openly document the entire meeting. Make it clear that you are in charge, not the "seller". It is your money and your goal that will be achieved. This "posturing" by yourself may be enough to deter someone taking advantage of you. A psychopath is a control freak. If you do not present yourself as an "easy target", the predator may move on to an easier fish to catch.
2. **Try not to be influenced by "props"** – It is not easy to get beyond the winning smile, the captivating body language, and fast talk of the typical psychopath. They use many methods to distract you from their

- real goal - to empty your pockets into theirs. There is the emotionless or “predatory” stare of the psychopath. It is an exercise of power as apposed to simple interest or empathic caring.
3. **Don’t wear blinkers** – Enter investment relationships with your eyes wide open. Is this deal “to good to be true”? Print the check list that I have developed from my web site or request it by mail. “**Questions to ask before you invest**”. [www.ethicaladvisor.com](http://www.ethicaladvisor.com) I have received feedback by many people who have used this checklist and they have said that it stops the investment predator dead in their tracks. At times they have found that it makes the predator angry. “How dare you question my integrity with these questions”? Or they respond with “don’t you trust me”? It has been my experience that professional advisors or a person who genuinely wants to invest with you or for you, would not object to being asked to explain the “full meal deal”. Full and open disclosure is healthy. Failure to do so is dangerous. A client of mine once shared with me his philosophy in life. “Trust but verify”.
  4. **Keep your guard up in high-risk situations** – are you feeling lonely, vulnerable and insecure? When you are traveling, do you look lost or forlorn? The human predator is no different than the animal predator. They look for the weak ones in the herd. They can sense them; track their prey until it’s the time to strike. I experience this whenever I am with my horses at the farm. Horses are animals of prey. For millions of years, they have developed survival habits that remain today. You can see when they are relaxed. Tail down, relaxed eyes and head position. Laying down or standing with only three supporting hooves. There are no predators around. However, in a split second, they will have their head up, eyes wide, ears up, four hooves solidly on the ground and looking and listening in the direction of the predator. What set this body language off will only be noticed by the horse. Their senses are that sharp. We could learn a lot from horses.
  5. **Know yourself** – psychopaths are skilled at detecting and ruthlessly exploiting your weak spots, at finding the right buttons to push. Understand your weak spots and be wary of anyone who zeros in on them. If you have a bit of larceny in your sole, the psychopath will sense this and exploit this weakness. From a financial planning point of view, insist that their investment proposal be in writing so you can review it with your other advisors. The predator may respond with “we are not allowed to share this with anyone else”. (And why are you so lucky?) Or, “can’t you make decisions on your own?” Etc.

6. **Cut your losses** - If you discover that you have been “victimized” already. Be ready to cut your losses. I have discovered a very simple tool to deal with this critical decision. It takes less than one minute to get your answer. I read about it in the book, “Make Your Own Luck” by Eileen Sharprio & Howard Stevenson. I have found this tool to be very helpful when the client needs to make dramatic changes. Rarely has it failed me or the client. If you would like a copy of this, call my office.

I have done many book reviews with various themes. The following summaries would be helpful in dealing with this issue. If you would like a copy of these reviews, I can email or mail it to you. No charge.

- **The Art of the long view** by Peter Schwartz. A book on scenario building
- **Predictable Surprises** by Max Bazerman & Michael Watkins. This book could change the way you make decisions, forever.
- **Blink** by Malcom Gladwell. This is about our intuition and how powerful it is.
- **Think** by Michael LeGault. A contrary point of view of **Blink**. LeGault thinks critical thinking is the way to go. I believe both writers have valid points of view.
- **The Wisdom of Crowds** by James Surowiecki. This book alone would cause most psychopaths to run for the hills if they read it.

I trust that this book summary has helped you by not being a victim of a psychopath in the future. It may just help you in making better investment decisions because you always have dealt with trusted advisors and colleagues. Sadly, we can become a victim of these predators indirectly. The stock market crashes of 2000 to March 2003 and November 2008 & March 2009 were littered with victims of predatory leaders in our society. Many are in jail now and many more corporations and individuals have paid billions of dollars in fines and class action law suites to pay for their wrong doings. How many of these leaders are psychopaths or just predators? I do not know. Will reading this book stop all this? No. However, you can “**Trust but verify**” and not become a be a victim.

Wayne Taylor P.R.P.