

GUT FEELINGS

Trevor Eddolls raises the profile of the 90% of cells that walk into our consulting rooms with each client.

When a client walks into our consulting room, we believe that we're considering the whole person when we make positive suggestions helping them work towards their goals. But what if there were additional techniques we could use to help our clients? Shouldn't we consider them?

There are more immune cells in your gut than in any other part of your body.

The truth is that when any person walks into a room, only 10 percent of the cells that come with them are human cells, the other 90% are microbial cells. Every person's microbiota (that's the posh name for all these other cells) is different as a result of their diet, lifestyle, and the childhood source of bacteria. Just about every part of a person (skin, intestines, etc) are covered in viruses, fungi, and most importantly (it seems) bacteria. And most of those bacteria can be found in the large intestines. And it seems that without them, most of our digestion, immune system, and overall health would be compromised.

So, here's a question: do the bacteria in your intestine make you fat? Could they also make you slim? Those are the questions that researchers at the Washington University School of Medicine, Missouri, tried to answer. They found twins, where one was fat and one was thin. So they took the bacteria from each twin's large intestine and put them into mice that had grown up in completely sterile environments and so had no bacteria already living in their guts. And guess what? Mice with bacteria from the obese twin became heavier and

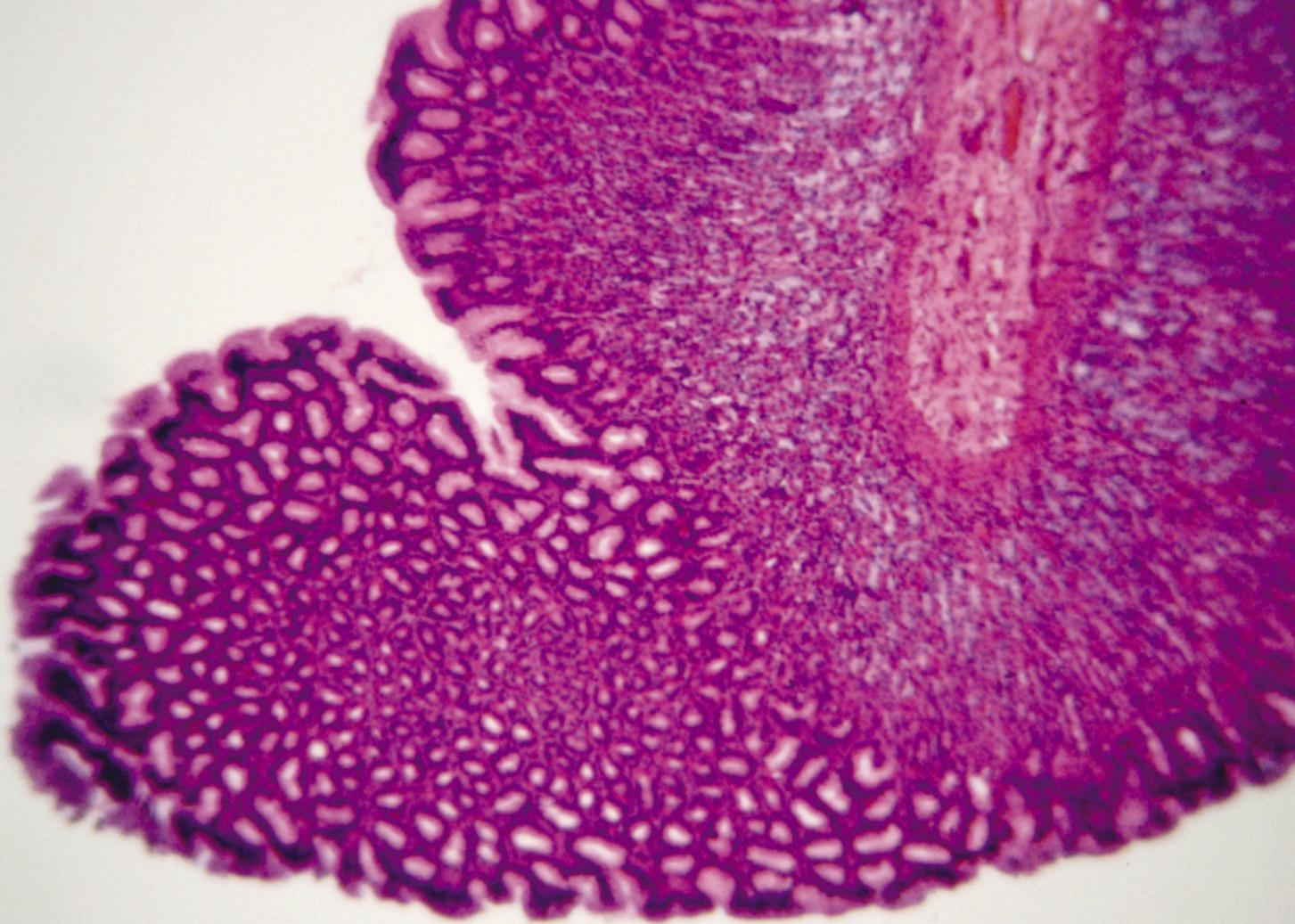
put on more fat than mice with bacteria from the lean twin!

The scientists explained this by suggesting that the bacteria from the lean twin were better at breaking down fibre into short-chain fatty acids. This meant that they were taking up more energy from the gut, but the chemicals were preventing fatty tissue from building up and increased the amount of energy being burned.

And it seems that diet is important for creating the right conditions for the 'lean' bacteria to grow. When they kept both sets of mice in the same cage, they all became lean when they were fed a low-fat, high-fibre diet. However, a high-fat, low-fibre diet meant the mice put on weight. The explanation (and look away now if you're squeamish) is that mice are coprophagic (they eat each other's droppings), so bacteria from the lean twin got into the gut of the mice who started with fat-twin bacteria.

Another study found that obese people have a less diverse microbiota than lean people. While another suggested that an increase in a group of gut bacteria called Firmicutes, and a decrease in a group of gut bacteria called Bacteroidetes, are linked to obesity.

Other scientists are suggesting a link between bacteria living in the gut and anxiety. Boston-based psychiatrist, Dr James Greenblatt, is reported to have treated a teenager with severe obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), as well as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and an array of digestive problems. Dr Greenblatt put the patient on a course of high-powered probiotics to boost her good bacteria, followed by antibiotics. After six



months, the patient's symptoms began to disappear. And by a year, they were gone.

In some patients, the streptococcus bacterium has been linked to OCD in a condition known as PANDAS (Paediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal infections). PANDAS is rare and usually appears in children. It's thought to be an autoimmune disorder that results in a combination of tics, obsessions, compulsions, and other symptoms such as Tourette syndrome. There's another report of a 10-year-old diagnosed with PANDAS, who was treated with probiotics, and his symptoms went away.

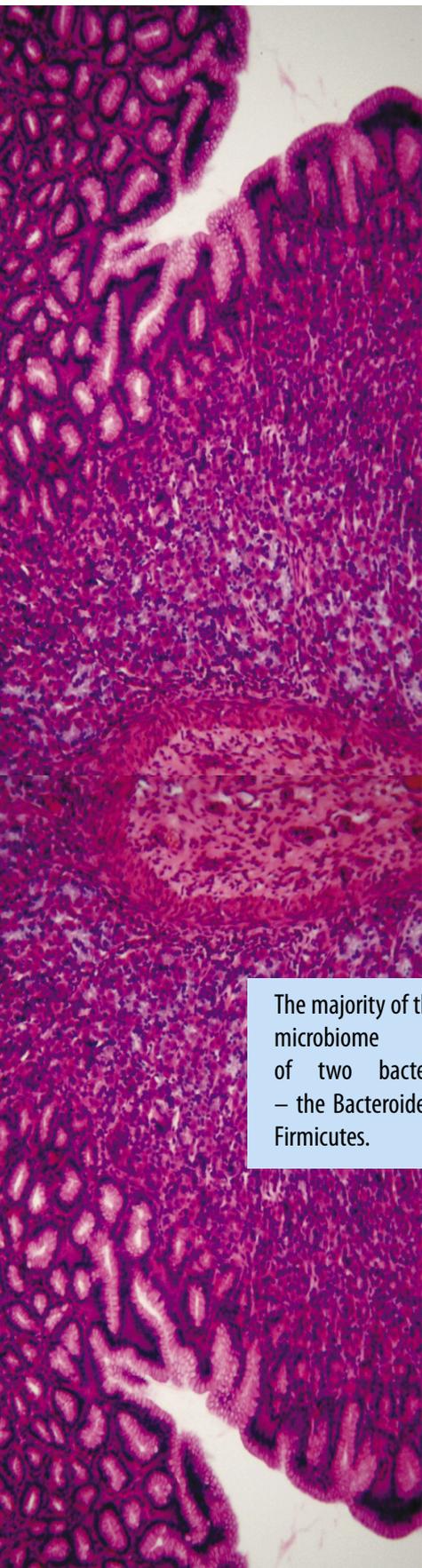
One of the issues that many people who want to stop smoking have is the worry that they will put on weight. They've seen it happen with others and they worry that they themselves will gain unwanted pounds. Studies have found that 80 percent of new non-smokers gain an average of 15 pounds. The good news is that evidence has recently come to light that this weight gain is not because they are eating more, but because of changes in their microbiota.

Researchers found that the most prevalent bacterial strains in obese people became dominant in people who've recently become non-smokers. Bacteria called Proteobacteria and Bacteroidetes decreased while Firmicutes and Actinobacteria increased.

Other researchers worked with the bacteria *Akkermansia muciniphila*, which usually makes up 3-5% of gut bacteria, but its levels fall in obese people. Mice were put on a high fat diet until they'd put on two to three times more fat than normal, lean, mice. They were then fed the bacteria. The result was that the mice remained bigger than their lean cousins, but they lost about half their extra weight (although they stayed on the same diet). They also had lower levels of insulin resistance, which is important with Type-2 diabetes.

The term microbiome was originally coined by Joshua Lederberg and is "the ecological community of commensal, symbiotic, and pathogenic microorganisms sharing our body space".

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The majority of the intestinal microbiome consists of two bacterial phyla – the Bacteroidetes and the Firmicutes.

Scientists suggested that adding the bacteria increased the thickness of the gut's mucus barrier, which stopped some material passing from the gut to the blood. It also changed the chemical signals coming from the digestive system, and that led to changes in the way fat was processed elsewhere in the body.

Another way to increase level of *Akkermansia muciniphila* was to add a type of fibre to the diets of the mice.

So, no, I'm not suggesting we start including faecal transplants in our therapy treatments. In fact, I'm not suggesting that we do anything directly with our clients' microbiota. What I am suggesting is that we can include information about when discussing weight gain in people who stop smoking with us, people who come for help with weight management and control, and maybe even some conditions such as OCD, stress, or depression.

And we might like to recommend people take prebiotics and probiotics, which are meant to stimulate the growth of healthy

Scientists compared the behaviour of normal 8-week-old mice with mice whose guts were stripped of microbes. The mice without bacteria showed higher levels of risk-taking and the stress hormone cortisol. They also had altered levels of the brain chemical BDNF, which may have links to anxiety and depression in humans.

bacteria in the gut, and are easily available in yoghurt-type foods. After all, if it helps with our work, why not? ■

Gut bacteria are good because they:

- ◆ Help us get energy from food
- ◆ Allow us to absorb vitamins
- ◆ Can help produce molecules that fight against inflammation
- ◆ Help develop our immune systems.

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Kintsugi

– A metaphor for emotional trauma - By Trevor Eddolls

I don't know whether you've ever thought about life this way, but sometimes I think of it like a useful old teapot. Here I am, and there you are, like a teapot that's used every day. One that's responsible for making something that everyone wants and everyone enjoys, but no-one perhaps gives it a second thought.

I'm not thinking about that artistically designed teapot that might sit untouched on display – perhaps on a Welsh dresser. Nor a teapot that sits in the cupboard and never sees the light of day. I'm thinking of one that's picked up and banged down, and used by everyone all the time.

And that teapot can start to show signs of wear – a bit like life's effect on me and probably you. It might have a couple of chips and may start to show signs of cracks forming, but all that proves is that it has been well used, and well able to handle constant use that may be rough at times and may be gentle at other times.

There's a story about a famous teapot in Japan that, back in the 15th century, was damaged and sent back to China for repair. The repairers used ugly metal staples – so when it was returned, Japanese craftsmen set to work on it. And they created a new art called kintsugi. The word means golden joinery. The repairs were made using a lacquer or resin sprinkled with powdered gold. The repaired teapot was revered as a work of art.

Repaired pottery became so fashionable that people would deliberately smash ceramic pots so they could be repaired in the kintsugi style.

A repaired pot showed just how much the original pottery was valued. It also showed how much of a story that piece had to tell. And that's like us. Our scars show our adventures with life and how interesting we are. The Japanese valued their teapots and proudly displayed the 'scars' on their pottery as works of art in their own right. They were more highly prized than the original pots had been.

And so the ways that we have been broken by life, by other people, by events, become things that we can be proud of, making us into greater works of art than we were before, making us more valuable, as people, because of our experience.

Think of kintsugi. Think of those powdered gold repairs. And think how those life-scars can be a good thing. And thinking of life as being like a teapot isn't quite so strange after all.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH HYPNOTHERAPY?

Trevor Eddolls takes a look at the problems facing hypnotherapy being accepted as a non fluffy treatment

Let's get right to the point. What's wrong with hypnotherapy is that it gets lumped in with other treatments which have no scientific backing and so loses out on credibility in the eyes of the public. This is made worse by the fact that some people with treatment rooms will let them out to hypnotherapists, chiropractors, acupuncturists, homeopaths, crystal healers, and many more. How can potential clients draw the line between what has scientific validity and what is just pure nonsense?

Let's start with some definitions so we know what we're talking about. An alternative therapy usually claims to be a complete system of medicine but lacks any scientific backing. A complementary therapy is one that can be used as well as conventional medicine but again, lacks any scientific proof. Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) is the accepted

group name for alternative and complementary medicines.

In the USA, the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) classifies complementary and alternative therapies into five different categories or domains.

- ◆ Whole medical systems, eg Chinese Medicine, Homeopathy and Ayurveda.
- ◆ Mind-body intervention, ie explores the interconnection between the mind, body and spirit
- ◆ Biologically-based therapy, ie uses substances found in nature.
- ◆ Manipulative and body-based methods, eg Chiropractic and Osteopathy.
- ◆ Energy therapy, which uses real or imagined energy fields.

A list of many of the CAMs available is shown below.

"Alternative medicine has either not been proved to work, or been proved not to work. You know what they call alternative medicine that's been proved to work? Medicine" – Tim Minchin, British-born Australian comedian, actor, and musician.

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|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Acupressure | Food therapy | Reiki |
| Acupuncture | Grahamism | San Jiao |
| Alexander Technique | Herbalism | Shen |
| Anthroposophic medicine | Hydrotherapy | Shiatsu |
| Aromatherapy | Hypnosis | Siddha Medicine |
| Ayurveda | Iridology | Tao Yin |
| Bates method | Jing | TCM model of the body |
| Biofeedback | Macrobiotics | Thalassotherapy |
| Chelation | Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD) | Therapeutic music |
| Chinese pulse diagnosis | Meridian | Trigger point |
| Chiropractic | Moxibustion | Tui na |
| Coin rubbing | Naturopathy | Unani |
| Colorpuncture | Neigong | Uroopathy |
| Colour therapy | Pilates | Water cure |
| Craniosacral therapy (CST) | Prana | Yin and yang |
| Cupping | Qi or Chi | Yoga |
| Feldenkrais Method | Qigong | Zang Fu theory |
| Five Elements | Reflexology | |
| Flower essence therapy | | |



There's no point in looking at each of these to see which ones have scientific validity and which don't, but I will highlight three of them – just to give them the fairness of a closer examination.

Let's start at the top of the alphabet with acupuncture. Acupuncture is the stimulation of specific points on the skin by inserting needles or applying heat or pressure. This stimulation corrects imbalances in the flow of qi, your vital energy, through channels called meridians. Research shows that real acupuncture was no better than sham acupuncture in reducing pain. And yet, acupuncture is approved by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) as a treatment for lower back pain.

Homeopathy is quite popular – there are even homeopathic hospitals in the UK. It was invented in 1796 by Samuel Hahnemann based on a theory of like cures like – therefore a substance that causes the symptoms of a disease in healthy people will cure similar symptoms in sick people! Remedies are prepared by repeatedly diluting a chosen substance in alcohol or distilled water, and dilution usually continues past the point at which no molecules of the original substance remain.

Reflexology usually involves the application of pressure to the feet and hands with specific thumb, finger, and hand techniques without the use of oil or lotion. It is based on the principles of zones and reflex areas that reflect an image of the body on the feet and hands. Manipulating these areas affects a physical change in the body. Again, there is no scientific evidence to show that it works as a treatment.

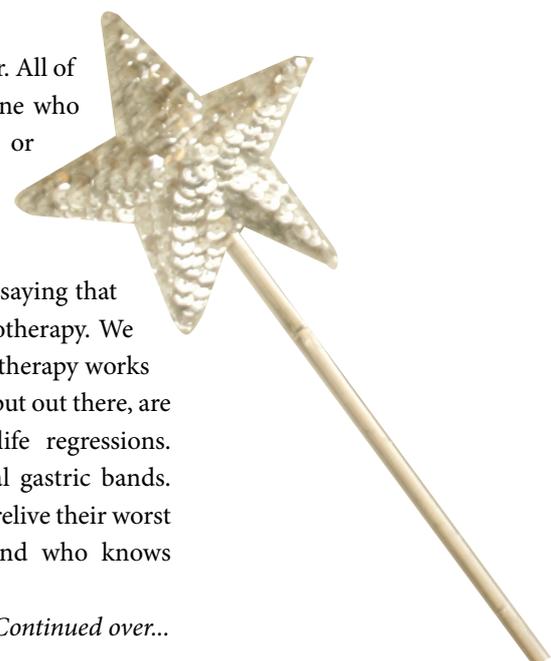
The nocebo effect is the adverse reaction experienced by a patient who receives a nocebo (I shall harm).

Are these they types of treatment that we want hypnotherapy to be associated with?

Of course, people do undergo these treatments, and they do come away saying they feel better. How can this be explained? Well, the answer is the placebo effect. A placebo (I please) is a medically ineffectual treatment that results in a patient having a perceived or actual improvement in a medical condition – the placebo effect. The Placebo effect is psychogenic, ie it is not caused by a biologically-active component but by the patient's mind. It seems that a person's belief that they have received an active treatment can produce the subjective changes thought to be produced by the real treatment. Belief, conditioning, and expectation, as well as how the placebo is delivered, and its size and colour, can play a role in how strong the placebo effect will be.

What we need is for hypnotherapy to produce so much research proving that it works, that it no longer languishes in the list of CAMs and is accepted by everyone as a therapy.

But that's not the end of the matter. All of us have probably spoken to someone who has had hypnotherapy in the past or has a friend who had hypnotherapy and they have had a very strange time. Sometimes, we as therapists have had to pick up the pieces. I'm saying that all hypnotherapy is not good hypnotherapy. We know that Solution Focused Hypnotherapy works and it works quickly and efficiently but out there, are hypnotherapists performing past-life regressions. There are therapists offering virtual gastric bands. There are therapists making people relive their worst fears or traumatic experiences. And who knows what else is going on?



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There's a name for alternative medicines that work. It's called medicine" – Joseph A Schwarcz, author and a professor at McGill University in Montreal, Quebec.

INDUSTRY



We know that many hypnotherapists use parts therapy. We know there are analytical hypnotherapists. It's not easy to separate good hypnotherapists from all the other therapists using unproven and unscientific techniques.

I'm not arguing for strict regulation. (Well, not here anyway!) My argument is that we need to make it clear in any research that we publish, that it is from solution-focused hypnotherapy as opposed to any other kind. We need to make it clear that

NICE recommends:

- The Alexander technique for Parkinson's disease.
- Ginger and acupressure for reducing morning sickness.
- Acupuncture and manual therapy, including spinal manipulation, spinal mobilization and massage

if people want a proven technique, they need to find a solution focused hypnotherapist in their area. And we need to all be working to make sure that we have clinically-proven results published in peer-reviewed scientific journals. We need to draw a clear distinction between successful solution-focused hypnotherapy and unscientific treatments, complementary, and alternative therapies. We need to become part of recognized medicine ■

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BOOK REVIEW

GUT FEELINGS

BY GERD GIGERENZER

We spend most of our time helping clients escape from their primitive brain, into their intellectual brain, so that they can regain control of their lives. This book explains how the primitive brain can be so successful at what it does, and why we should use it.

Gerd Gigerenzer is Director of the Center for Adaptive Behaviour and Cognition at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin. He begins by showing how less knowledge is better than more knowledge when making decisions. He illustrates his counter-intuitive ideas with a quiz question. Which city has the larger population, Detroit or Milwaukee? People who know a lot about the USA tend to ponder for a long time and often get it wrong. People with only a slight knowledge of US cities generally get it right!

What about catching a ball that someone has thrown or hit? Do you, like a robot, calculate the parabola of the falling ball (allowing for wind) and run to the right spot to catch it? Or do you use a simple rule of thumb (a heuristic) that allows most people to be in the right place for the catch? The heuristic is to run at the right speed and to keep your angle of gaze constant – watch a person on TV and notice that's what they do.

Gigerenzer suggests that a hunch appears quickly in the unconscious; has underlying reasons that we're not sure of, and is strong enough to act on. He found that unconscious motor skills are impeded by deliberation – experts performed better when time constrained rather than when they had plenty of time. Cognitive limitations help us – that's why we forget some information. The more choices you have, the harder it is to choose. In a complex world simple rules of thumb predict the future as accurately as complex rules. Being overly curious destroys trust.

His rule for dealing with people is tit for tat. He suggests that you co-operate first, remember how they behaved most recently, and imitate their last behaviour. Gigerenzer's rule is that in an uncertain environment it's useful to ignore information. He looks at the vagaries of language highlighting how the word 'and' can have different meanings. When you're shopping, the recommendation is to buy a brand you recognize and choose the second least expensive model. He recommends that you don't ask a doctor what they would advise; rather you ask them what they would actually do.

In terms of explaining people's behaviour, Gigerenzer suggests that one of the strongest rules of thumb is to not break ranks – do what the majority of your peers do. Deep down we're sensitive to harm, reciprocity, hierarchy, in-group, and purity – they're what guide our decision making. Looking at how people make decisions (the book examines magistrates deciding on whether to bail a defendant), people use, what's called a fast and frugal tree (see illustration). You ask a question; the answer 'no' leads to a decision, the answer 'yes' leads to a second question, following the same format leads to a third question, and that's usually enough layers to make a decision.

The book provides a fascinating insight into what lies behind people's behaviour and how they can make quick decisions. I guess our role is dealing with people who have a rule of thumb that isn't working for them.

Gut Feelings: Short Cuts to Better Decision Making

Gerd Gigerenzer

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Reviewed by Trevor Eddolls

