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The Murderer Next Door: Why the Mind Is Designed to Kill

By David M. Buss



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The Murderer Next Door: Why the Mind Is Designed to Kill By David M. Buss

As acclaimed psychological researcher and author David Buss writes, "People are mesmerized by murder. It commands our attention like no other human phenomenon, and those touched by its ugly tendrils never forget." Though we may like to believe that murderers are pathological misfits and hardened criminals, the vast majority of murders are committed by people who, until the day they kill, would seem to be perfectly normal.

David Buss's pioneering work has made major national news in the past, and this provocative book is sure to generate a storm of attention. **The Murderer Next Door** is a riveting look into the dark underworld of the human psyche—an astonishing exploration of when and why we kill and what might push any one of us over the edge. A leader in the innovative field of evolutionary psychology, Buss conducted an unprecedented set of studies investigating the underlying motives and circumstances of murders, from the bizarre outlier cases of serial killers to those of the friendly next-door neighbor who one day kills his wife.

Reporting on findings that are often startling and counterintuitive—the younger woman involved in a love triangle is at a high risk of being killed—he puts forth a bold new general theory of homicide, arguing that the human psyche has evolved specialized adaptations whose function is to kill. Taking readers through the surprising twists and turns of the evolutionary logic of murder, he explains exactly when each of us is most at risk, both of being murdered and of becoming a murderer. His findings about the high-risk situations alone will be news making.

Featuring gripping storytelling about specific murder cases—including a never used FBI file of more than 400,000 murders and a highly detailed study of 400 murders conducted by Buss in collaboration with a forensic psychiatrist, and a pioneering investigation of homicidal fantasies in which Buss found that 91 percent of men and 84 percent of women have had at least one such vivid fantasy—**The Murderer Next Door** will be necessary reading for those who have been fascinated by books on profiling, lovers of true crime and murder mysteries, as well as readers intrigued by the inner workings of the human mind.



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Editorial Review

From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Reviewers with scientific training have no kind words for *The Murderer Next Door*. The author's investiture in the controversial field of evolutionary psychology—which posits that human behavior is the product of evolution—leads him to assert that homicidal fantasies are more common than the reader might believe, and smacks of self promotion. While Buss's argument is internally consistent, his premise runs counter to established anthropological and biological studies. Readers unversed in those sciences might receive Buss's claims about homicide's roots more openly, and find them both credible and disturbing.

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From [Booklist](#)

Psychology professor Buss first became interested in the roots of homicide when a close friend flew into a murderous rage against his wife at a party. The fact that this gentle man came close to murdering a loved one contradicted a number of beliefs Buss had always held about homicide, chief among them that murderers are necessarily insane. This book, the result of Buss' research into a never-used file of more than 400,000 murders and a close collaboration with psychiatrists at the Michigan Center for Forensic Psychiatry, led him to a new view: that murder is the product of evolutionary forces and that the homicidal act, in evolutionary terms, conveys advantages to the killer. Buss sets out to dispel what he terms some misperceptions about murder, misperceptions based largely on the media's focus on serial killers. Well argued and unsettling.

Connie Fletcher

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Review

"[Buss's] contravening of the conventional wisdom on murders shows promise of becoming the new conventional wisdom." —**The Washington Post Book World**

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Matthew Williams:

In this 21st century, people become competitive in each way. By being competitive currently, people have do something to make them survives, being in the middle of typically the crowded place and notice by surrounding. One thing that often many people have underestimated that for a while is reading. That's why, by reading a reserve your ability to survive improve then having chance to stand than other is high. For you who want to start reading some sort of book, we give you this specific *The Murderer Next Door: Why the Mind Is Designed to Kill* book as beginner and daily reading reserve. Why, because this book is more than just a book.

Phyllis Spencer:

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Anthony Lainez:

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