

Becoming a Mentalist...

An Overview Created Exclusively for the MagicTALK Forum and its Membership

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Since about 1998 there has been a trend within the world of magic in which folks have been drawn into what's known as the Bizarre & Psychic side of things – the performance of magic that feels real and flirts with the surreal. But, within this same course of transition we have seen an increase of conflict between what the “truest” see and know these things to be vs. what the newcomers and more cynical want it to be.

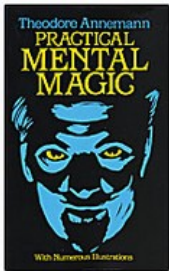
Truth of the matter is prior to the mid-1970s very few “Mentalists” employed a disclaimer of any kind and actually promoted themselves as being Telepathists, Mind Readers, Clairvoyants, Medium, etc. There were exceptionally few not following this “rule of thumb” as it were and among that few were men like [Joseph Dunninger](#) and [Theodore Annemann](#); magicians that blended the intrigues of the eye with mysteries for the mind. Though both gave to the industry some major boons, they also (without intent I'd have to say) cast in stone a certain mold that many took too when it came to this particular aspect of the craft. Probably due to the fact that so few in the magic world, were aware of all those masters of the mind that were out there, intentionally distanced from the magician's world and mesmerizing audiences by the thousands wherever they happened to roam. Our point being that even back then, there were two distinctly different forms of “Mentalism” but yet, both shared many similarities. Dunninger, Annemann, Larsen, Boarde and all the other yesteryear gurus of the craft sold just as many Horoscopes, Readings, and lucky talismans as [Anna Riva](#) and the Voodoo gangs of St. Louis and New Orleans. The fact of life being that these good old boys used every one of those dirty tricks you've read about for the sake of making a buck and that my friends is what it's always been about; even [Houdini & Kellar's](#) famed expose programs on Mediums were about turning the dollar and hitting the headlines, they had little to nothing to do with the validity of Mediums, Psychics, etc. that was just the sales tag... the hook that promised something different.

There are those that take it quite personally when a seasoned truest of these fields challenges their knowledge, experience and perceptions. Let's face it, when you've done something for longer than another person has been alive and done it daily as your course of income, then chances are you have a bit more “perspective” as to how to present it than those newer and less experienced. But, because you are a truest and not some over-hyped personality that's written a popular book endorsed by all the others in the craft that support your more cynical point of view, people tend to ignore what you have to say... that is, until they start getting some experience and realizing that the self-made gurus of the trade might not be as learned or wise to things as they claim.

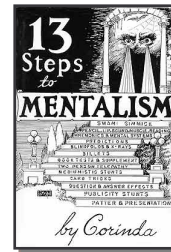
Recently I made a post in a thread in which a newbie asked for honest and sincere insight as to where to start and what to do. The replies to that post inspired me to pull this little ditty together so that our moderators might place it in a place of easy access and we

might be able to point others curious about learning solid Mentalism and how to go about doing it “the right” way.

Understand that what I offer is a refined look at things vs. how most of us tend to do things (backwards). If you were to step back and plot out a deliberate course of study, this is more or less, what it should look like and the kind of time frames you could find best suited for your actions. Keep in mind, I leave little to no room open when it comes to novelty and the latest in cool stuff; this deals with the foundation to it all and as best I can, I’m including reasons why things are in the order they are in.



Now, the two primary “Bibles” of Mentalism are of course [Corinda’s 13 Steps to Mentalism](#) and [Annemann’s Practical Mental Magic](#). I personally believe a serious student needs no other resources outside of these during the first six months of their personal study and even then, the supplemental materials should only be materials that help them in refining the skills and techniques outlined in these two tomes.



But this brings us to a couple of important questions as well, in that we need to weigh which skills that are outlined in these books, are the most critical to building our arsenal; the answer being as follows...

- **BILLET WORK** is in my experience, the single most practical of the “mechanical” methods or skills we can learn. For the Mentalist this is comparable to becoming a solid card or coin man in the traditional magic world in that it is one of the most empowering of the mechanical skills.

Many would ask why I’ve not started off with Swami type work and the truth of the matter is, I feel that this is far more secondary over basic billet control; knowing no less than six solid switches that you can do flawlessly along with six solid read techniques and, given today’s popularity it all, three solid peeks and when I say that, I mean three very specific peeks in particular; [Acidus Novus](#), [Acidus Globus](#) and the Osterlind *Perfect Center Tear* (In truth you need no other in that most of the others are based on the original [Longman-Mann](#) glimpse published years ago) – well, that’s all you really need outside a good wit and strong understanding of people.

- **SWAMI & POCKET WRITING** skills are important in that they empower you when working with billets, in the act of taking a varied approach. As Bob Cassidy would say “*Mix your Methods!*”

By using multiple methods, such as confident billet work, a swami or pocket write type bit, you can readily repeat a basic effect and unlike our magician cousins, not find yourself dealing with “heat” from spectators because your approach all the way through, will be different each time. This subtle version of “misdirection” is why so many mentalists and even spiritualists gain a quick and very established reputation for being “real” and why it is so difficult at times to catch a genuine charlatan in the act of duping the public.

- **Swami Writing** can aid you in a number of ways as you find in Corinda as well as a good study of the [Bascom Jones](#) *MAGICK*

publications. Though few ever reach the skill level of being a confident master of penmanship using this device, most all of us have the ability to draw simple shapes and make an x or check and for much of mentalism that's all you really need. But, be aware of the fact that as someone that's worked in this field for nearly 20 years now, I rarely ever use such a device e.g. it's really up to you and your style as to how much import you place on this and its related technique...

- **Pocket Writing**, in my mode of operation, is superior to the Swami approach on things but that is because it fits my style and philosophic points of view better as a performer. Personally, I'd suggest you practice and learn all you can on this technique in that it can be devastating when set into the appropriate scenario... I use it a good deal when in casual environs and asked to demonstrate my skills... nothing knocks a person off their feet faster than you pulling out an ugly little note card with their name and other personal details about them on it that's buried in a pile of other rough notes.
- **Double-Writing** is another technique used in Mentalism that is surprisingly simple to do and for as bold as it seems, uncannily deceptive. The biggest drawback to this technique is that we tend to be too self-aware and our own fear becomes what draws attention to the idea that we may be doing something "underhanded". As [Stephan Minch](#) pointed out long ago however, if you can't overcome your magician's guilt you'll never make it as a Mentalist.

➤ **MUSCLE READING** is one of the most important skills I think any Mentalist or Bizarrist can learn. Once "mastered" you really need nothing else. Though Corinda barely touches upon this skill it is my suggestion that you invest as much time as possible learning about it, practicing it and developing both, the contact and non-contact forms of this skill. This will include all other techniques that exploit the ideomotor syndrome such as Pendulum work, dowsing, etc.

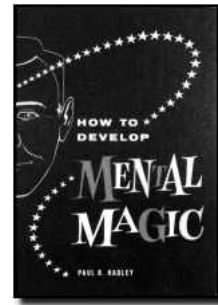
The best sources for this area of study belong to [Banachek](#), his #3 DVD of the Mentalism series and his book "[Psychophysiological Thought Reading](#)". I also recommend a thorough study of the older materials produced by Robert Nelson (*Hellstromism*), Satori and *Contact Mind Reading* by William Shantz (Hades Publishing).

Another great read on this topic is Bob Cassidy's dissertation on the life and times of [Wolf Messing](#), a master of Contact Mind Reading who kind of took on the role of being Communist Dictator Joseph Stalin's personal Reader and *court jester*. The book is a fascinating tale and true to Dr. Bob's twisted nature, delivers some far out thinking for the manipulative rue that lives in all of us.

NOTE: Between the Cassidy & Shantz books you will have sufficient 'trick based' techniques for replicating true Muscle Reading and thus, have enough material for cultivating an act with said theme. You will also find added insight to this kind of program in my own *Psychic Technologies Compilation* set under the heading **INTUITIONAL SIGHT**.

➤ **MNEMONIC/CODE SYSTEMS** are a must though they can be a bit of a pain at first. My suggestion is to make up a system that is simple and logical to you and how your brain works. The code I used as a foundation to my personal mnemonic system was created by Paul Hadley back in the 1950s and is available through Hades Publication in a book entitled "[How to Develop Mental Magic](#)" if you want to understand how I applied his basic thinking you will need to get a copy of my book "[EASY READING](#)".

I must point out that there are a few points of associative conflict in my book in that certain astrological signs for an example might actually be related to an element other than where they are listed but my goal was to exploit the course of sequence more than some of the other “finer” points on things. Quite simply, you will learn that the number one relates to the letter “A”, the male name of “Adam” the month of January, etc... everything that is first and so on. It likewise reveals how all things that fit in this sequential arrangement have similar meanings e.g. if you know a person’s zodiac or birth date, you instantly know what tarot card matches up to them, what colors, rune patterns, etc. You are prepared to give a very complete Reading but, there is more to this than meets the eye...



Many young mentalist want to show-off their memory skills so all you have to do, at least in the case of my system, is remember to start your list with the person wearing (for an example) a Red shirt and then go from there, matching items to the color of clothing and that to the face and position so you can create the illusion of complete and total recall. What’s amazing is that you can have a blindfolded partner come into a room and name everything in order as well using the same exact techniques...

I think this basic overview reveals to you why the cultivation of a mnemonic and code system is important to you both, as an individual and team styled performer so don’t overlook this important step or you’ll have lots of catching up to do on down the road. For more insight on this technique as well as the idea of working with sequences, such as those used in my *EASY READING* codes, check your Corinda book pages 59-80 as well as pages 237—270 (with special emphasis on the sequenced technique outlined on pages 265 & 266).

Some other (highly recommended) Reading for you to consider, while you are in this phase of your studies includes the following...

Richard Webster... {Stevens Magic Emporium}

- Psychometry from A-Z
- Forecasting the Future with Numerology
- Aura Reading for Fun & Profit
- Gem Stone Reading
- Sea Shell Reading
- Palmistry
- Pendulum
- **AUDIO SERIES FROM MARTIN BREEZE**
 - Mastering Cold Reading
 - Commercial Cold Reading

John Riggs...

- Runic Palmistry
- Palmistry Book #2
- The Messiah Process
- Urban Shaman

Bob Cassidy...

- The Real Work of Cold Reading
- Theories & Methods for the Practical Psychic
- The Master Mind Papers
- FUNdamentals I & II
- One Man Billet Act

3rd Quarter's Study – Anagrams & Force Techniques

Without a doubt much of what we've outlined above is going to flow over onto your next area of study, but that's perfectly fine in that what I'm suggesting here is more akin to a life-time's investment of learning than a few short months. The few short months however will give to you some foundation knowledge to principles Mentalist must learn to master and I can't stress enough that 90% of all it centers on our ability to properly communicate.

You will hear a great deal about both the **PATEO** and **EQUIVOQUE** forces, both of which are exceptionally simple in theory but dreadfully difficult to sell when one hasn't applied his/her self into learning and understanding the psychology around them and these are just two of the primary forces we exploit as Mentalists. A solid student will lend a good amount of time to the Annemann force book and find at least six to ten solid force methods that use everyday objects and/or word controls so that you are prepared for those "drop of the hat" moments in which you must prove your psychic prowess.

I personally recommend studying the **Maven/Goldstein** treatise on Equivoque as well as Docc Hilford's *E'voque* manuscripts along side the thinking that's gone into this and similar manipulations shared by Chuck Hickok and others.

ANAGRAMS come in a couple of different forms and have, in the past few years, become a matter of standard study to the 21st century mentalist. In truth, it's been a highly guarded technique for decades in that it is such a clean mode of "pumping" a spectator in order to define their thought. I would suggest you take a quick trip to <http://www.underground-collective.com/> and get yourself a copy of both, **PANAGRAM** and (on down the road some) **SENSORY PROJECTION**. Too, as you become more familiar and comfortable in working with this technique you will be doing yourself a tremendous favor in learning Daniel Love's "**Dream Signs**" technique (also available via the above group).

Some other (highly recommended) Reading for you to consider, while you are in this phase of your studies includes the following...

Miscellaneous Resources

- Psychological Subtleties (Banachek)
- The L.E.A.T.H. Technique (David Lees)
- Mentalism Incorporated II (Chuck Hickok)
- 101 Forces by Annemann

The Next Step – *Becoming a Reader*

This is without question the one area I hear the most complaining and moans over but, if you doubt my word on this topic re-read pages 339 -- 343 in Corinda and consider the fact that up until just a very few short years ago, doing Readings wasn't only common practice, it was part of the craft as far as Mentalism was concerned and just one of the vehicles used by real mentalists when it came to making or augmenting their income. Secondly, ignore all the controversy around being a Reader and consider just how powerful these observational skills can be in everyday life.

More than anything else, this is why you owe it to yourself to invest some time and serious energy into developing your skills as a Reader of people. This however is a journey that must, if you are to gain the strongest advantage for yourself, start with learning the more "legit" methods used by psychics, gypsies, ministers and cult-leaders for eons.

Why?

Because until you see first hand how accurate you can be using these legitimate "sciences" you run the risk of creating a personal blindness around the process that will limit your effectiveness, believability factors, and your ability to garner both, higher income and stronger public relation based rapport.

- **NUMEROLOGY** is probably the single most practical oracle system to learn in that it is the most versatile and empowering, allowing you to exploit its principles in a covert manner, when working with other oracular techniques. Richard Webster has given the Psychic Entertainment industry a plethora of insight as to how to use Numerology effectively for bits in which we forecast the future, do a cradle to the grave reading, aura readings, past life & karma readings and more!
- **NAKED APE READINGS** are something few of you will recognize and yet, it is one of the more common and important skills exploited by Readers, Psychologists, Criminal Investigators and Doctors... it is the art and science of "knowing" about a person based entirely on their body type, face shape, etc. I have listed it here as a sort of catch-all in that the second most practical area of divination study centers on the human animal as a physical being...
 - **ASIAN FACE READING** is a technique that's even recognized by many skeptics as hosting a sense of validity to it
 - **SOMOATYPES** is a technique still loosely employed in both the Mental and physical health fields, based on the 19__s studies by Dr. _____ and his findings around the human body.
 - **PALMISTRY** is obviously something you've heard of and have some minor inkling about. Aside from the tomes by Webster & Martin on this topic you may wish to look into those by John Riggs.
- **ORACLES** include everything from the Tarot & Runes to Dream Interpretation and the psychology of ritual. In short, it is learning the meanings assigned to symbols, shapes, frequency factors, and "esoteric geography".

In that this is a vast field of study the author's recommendation for a first year student is very simple; pick one primary oracle system such as the Tarot and learn it! Study only the books, spreads, theories and rituals outlined around that particular system for at least one full year before moving on. Not only is this a matter of tradition, it is also a matter of practicality; to move on sooner can result in personal confusions and not being able to "connect" properly with the oracle of choice.

I highly recommend a formal study of Jungian based psychology during this year's course in learning said oracle. The reason is very simple; Jung's theories all came from esoteric and anthropologic studies e.g. you will gain a stronger and more appropriate perspective on symbols and their affect on the human psyche when taking this approach in your studies.

Some other (highly recommended) Reading for you to consider, while you are in this phase of your studies includes the following...

Miscellaneous Authors from Hades Publications - Canada

- [Answers to Questions – Robert Nelson](#)
- [Effective Answers to Questions – Robert Nelson](#)
- [More Effective Answers to Questions – Robert Nelson](#)
- [The Astrological Reader – Will Dexter](#)
- [Confessions of a Medium – Anonymous](#)
- [How to Read Sealed Messages – Robert Nelson](#)

Fred Crouter...

- Advanced Psychic Readings
- Persuasion: the Most Gentle Art

Kenton Knepper/Wonder Wizards

- S.A.R. Reading System
- [Completely Cold](#)
- WonderWords
- [MIND READING](#)

Bob Cassidy {you must sign up to access products}

- The Truth About Cold Reading
- [The Millennial Medium](#)
- [The Messing Effect](#)
- [Book of the Golden Tortoise](#)

Millard Longman...

- [Psychic Skills Workshop](#)

WORKING IT! – Hobby or Trade, this is the way...

In theory you have invested between 16-24 months into your studies in following this suggested outline. You have to your advantage, a very solid sense about your skills in working billets, doing Readings and of course, communicating with people but let's take just a minute to focus on that last issue...

The most important skill of any showman but especially the psychic entertainer is his/her ability to communicate in an effective and confident manner. If you cannot obtain that level of control, you need to reconsider your goals or find ways of working around your deficiencies. The thing is, your ability to use words along with body language techniques are vital elements when it comes to how successful you are going to be as a mentalist. Clinging onto street slang and sloppy grammar will only assure you of one thing; getting no where really fast.

Taking courses in etiquette, effective speaking and even exercises in vocabulary building are things that will only aid you in the long run, so don't try to take short cuts when it comes to this particular issue.

My *[Psychic Technologies Compilation](#)* will give you a very solid overview as to how anyone can start in just about any rural market and create a reasonable full or part-time career for themselves working as a mentalist/psychic entertainer, so I'm not going to go into too many details at this point. But I will bring out something Richard Webster observed many years ago when it came to what it is we do; a magician is at the mercy of agents, bookers and his/her own aggressive actions in getting the next show. A Mentalist need be sit down for coffee and conversation with a total stranger and he/she has the opportunity to pull in a quick \$20.00 to over \$100.00 in just a few moments. This is an advantage we've had for generations and it is an advantage some would like us to do without, hence the negative press when it comes to the art of being a Reader and more importantly, being a truest within the Mentalist field.

The "ethics" and "moral" issues surrounding such things lean on YOU as a person and your own integrity. I know many exceptionally honest and sincere people in this world that work as Readers who wouldn't harm a fly let alone, taking advantage of someone in need. Then too, I know many a minister and politician that would just as sure take the shirt off you back as to look at you. So it's not what you do in way of the label, but what you do with it. After all, Robin Hood was only seen as a villain by those wanting to overthrow the government and suppress the masses and even Hitler was recognized as *the Savior of Germany* and in many ways, it is a title still warranted him to this day... he just abused the system and instead of continuing along a path in which good was achieved, transmuted what he'd begun into a thing of evil. This is a decision that you must make and make at almost a daily interval given the amount of times opportunity can surface for taking advantage of folks.

Many of us have a negative image around the art of being a Reader because of the propaganda that's been put into place over the past decade or so, beginning with the release of Ian Rowland's "*Full Facts Book on Cold Reading*" – a deliberate expose' composed by one that is a self-admitted skeptic. Though I do endorse this tome as a course of second year study, I also discourage people from getting too carried away with Ian's encouragement in harassing and baiting local Readers and other such soft targets. If you want to be a "debunker" then learn what to look for **and go after the real criminals!**

A PERSONAL MESSAGE

It is well known that I have a “problem” with much of today’s Skeptic point of view and this centers-on two primary points;

1. The expressed lack of respect so many skeptics show towards persons that do have a belief or testimony in something.
2. The fact that they attack or “single-out” the soft targets rather than going after the real criminals.

I personally loathe any and all forms of predator be it someone that preys on children, beats on women, abuses animals, or exploits peoples beliefs for the sake of personal/organizational gain. This position envelopes many areas not just the psychic or religious side of things but most every aspect of society and culture. I know of Evangelists that are more crooked and under-handed in their grab for money and political control than I do devout Satanist that think it’s right to slaughter animals let alone hurt another human being (in true Satanism such is not done, believe it or not.)

YOUR position on things should always weigh the rights of others first and then the “facts”. If you believe it is important to educate the public to the facts about how Charlatans work, then look at what the most logical and positive ways would be for getting that word out to the people it needs to get to.

Believe me, if you run out on stage like Penn Jillette or Jamie Ian Swiss and call everyone in the room an idiot if they believe in God, the Devil and the Tarot it is more than likely going to be YOU that gets the life lesson... the fact that people don’t like to be treated in that manner. Even so-called “celebrities” are starting to see that this kind of ignorant behavior is damaging to their own careers and “good” names; something most “new” to this business can’t afford. So I invite you to consider my own philosophy and approach around this issue. I think it will sate your desires to be of services to the public and at the same time, allow you to stand on much higher ground in matters of public perspective. To coin an old phrase, *we will gain far more bees using honey than we will vinegar.*

So there you have it, an outline to the world of Mentalism and the books/authors you want to learn from first in order to get things “right”.

There’s much more... so very much more! But take your time as you embark on this journey so that you can enjoy the adventure. I promise you, it’s fun and most revealing.

Blessed Be!