

12+ Don't Give Yourself Away to Others

How to stop getting drained by people,
protect your well-being, and create a life
where you feel good.

— EMMA KOX —



Emma Kox

**Dont't give yourself away to others.
How to stop getting drained by people,
protect your well-being, and
create a life where you feel good**

«Издательские решения»

Кох Е.

Don't give yourself away to others. How to stop getting drained by people, protect your well-being, and create a life where you feel good
/ Е. Кох — «Издательские решения»,

Do you feel drained by certain people, their emotions, or constant demands? Do you sometimes feel like you're losing yourself while trying to keep everyone else happy? Don't Give Yourself Away to Others will help you understand what drains you — and how to stop letting it control your state. Learn to protect your energy, stop absorbing emotions that aren't yours, set healthy boundaries, restore your balance. Create a life where you feel calm and fully yourself.

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Don't give yourself away to others How to stop getting drained by people, protect your well-being, and create a life where you feel good

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Illustrator Midjournal

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ISBN 978-5-0071-3568-9

Created with Ridero smart publishing system

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This book did not begin with an idea. It began with an observation that could no longer be ignored. One day I noticed that fatigue does not always come after work. And it does not always disappear after rest. There were days when I did a great deal and remained focused, clear, alive. And there were other days when nothing special seemed to happen, yet by evening there was a heaviness inside, as if someone had quietly erased energy from me.

At first, it seemed accidental. Then — a coincidence. But over time it became obvious: this was repeating too precisely to be an accident. I began to ask myself a simple question: what exactly changes during the day if outwardly almost nothing happens?

Very quickly I noticed something that no one had previously paid attention to in my picture of the world. It is not events that change me. It is people who change me.

Not in a dramatic or obvious way. Not through conflicts or important conversations. But much more subtly — through mere presence, through tone of voice, through inner rhythm, through an emotional background that is imperceptibly transmitted and becomes part of my own state.

I began to observe this systematically. And I saw that after some people my thoughts became faster and clearer; after others — heavier and slower. After some, a sense of inner support appeared; after others — inner scattering. And most importantly, this happened even when the conversation seemed completely ordinary.

At some point it became impossible to continue calling this simply a «mood.» Because mood turned out not to be an internal phenomenon. It turned out to be the result of interaction. That is how the idea for this book appeared.

I did not try to create a theory. I tried to describe a mechanism that every person already lives through, but almost never notices.

This book is not about «bad» or «good» people. Not about toxicity. Not about psychological labels. And certainly not about trying to shut yourself off from the world. It is about something else.

About how the human state actually works in reality. About what happens inside us when we come into contact with other people. About why sometimes we feel exhausted where we «did nothing,» and why sometimes we remain strong where there was a lot of load. And most importantly — about what can be done about it.

If you read this book attentively, you will gradually begin to notice what was previously invisible. You will start to see how your state changes after different people. How your fatigue is formed. How attention goes not into tasks, but into contacts. How a day consists not of actions, but of influences.

And one day you will catch yourself thinking a very simple thought: you were never outside of this process. You have always lived in it. It was simply automatic before. This book does not promise you a «new life» in the usual sense. It does something else — it returns observation to you. And observation always precedes control.

And perhaps the most important thing you will take from this book will not be new information, but a new sense of reality: that your state is not accidental.

And not background. But the result of a system that can be seen, understood, and gradually regulated. If this is so, then everything you used to consider fatigue, people, communication, and ordinary days begins to look different. And this is exactly where this book begins.

PART I. HOW PEOPLE AFFECT YOUR STATE

Chapter 1. Why You Get Tired Not from Tasks, but from People

One day you notice this in the most ordinary day, one that is no different from the others, and precisely for that reason you do not attach importance to it at first. The morning begins calmly, almost neutrally, without fatigue or inner tension, and this creates a deceptive confidence that the day will remain just as even as usual, without disruptions or overload.

But by evening a state appears that is difficult to explain by the logic of the day you have lived through. Nothing significant happened. No conflicts. No obvious reasons for tiredness. The day may even have been surprisingly calm, and this is exactly what makes the emerging heaviness especially puzzling, as if it did not come from events but from something else, something that went unnoticed.

And you almost automatically find a familiar explanation that closes the question without requiring further reflection: you are simply tired, the day was long, you need to rest. This explanation seems sufficient because it is familiar and socially acceptable, and most people do not go any further at this point. But sometimes rest does not restore the inner state with which the day began. And then a subtle discrepancy appears that is difficult to ignore: a sense that the fatigue does not fully correspond to what you actually did, that something in its nature goes beyond the usual logic of cause and effect.

And if at this moment you do not close the question but simply begin to look more carefully, an observation gradually emerges that changes the entire picture of perception: your state throughout the day is never autonomous and stable. It continuously changes under the influence of other people you come into contact with, even if this contact outwardly seems neutral, brief, or insignificant.

This influence is almost never felt as influence, because it does not take the form of pressure, is not accompanied by drama, and does not stand out against the background of ordinary communication. It is woven into the very fabric of interaction — into intonations, pauses, the speed of response, the emotional background, into the way another person is present beside you. And for this very reason it passes unnoticed in the moment, while accumulating over time.

If you begin to carefully review the day, it becomes clear that after some people you feel an inner clarity and composure, as if your attention becomes denser and more precise, while after others there arises a barely noticeable tension or fatigue, even if the conversation was short and outwardly unremarkable. The words may be equally simple, the topics mundane, the situations familiar, but the internal effect turns out to be different.

And gradually it becomes obvious that the matter was never limited to the number of tasks or the level of workload. Fatigue is formed not from events as such, but from the sequence of states you pass through during the day, and these states are largely shaped not by circumstances, but by the people who enter your field of attention.

At this moment, the very logic of explaining your own life changes. You begin to see that you never live a day in an isolated inner space, because your state is constantly in contact with the states of other people, and this exchange happens so naturally and continuously that it remains unnoticed until you begin to observe it consciously. And then the привычное explanation of fatigue ceases to be sufficient not because it is wrong, but because it is incomplete. Behind it, a more precise picture begins to emerge: the day is formed not only by actions and events, but by the influences you pass through, and it is they that imperceptibly shape the state you ultimately call yourself.

The first contact occurred almost imperceptibly, as usually happens with things that later turn out to be more important than all the obvious events of the day. The person near spoke about their difficulties, about injustice, about how much in life is arranged incorrectly and how hard it is to

endure. You listened, nodded, maintained the conversation in the usual polite manner, seeing nothing special in it, because such conversations seem to be part of normal human communication.

But while you remained in this conversation, an almost imperceptible shift began to occur inside. Not sharp, not emotional, but slow and dense, as if attention were losing its lightness. Thoughts became less mobile, the mood gradually lost its transparency, and the body began to feel slightly more collected and tense, although outwardly nothing changed. And precisely because of this outward normality, you did not attach importance to it, because the conversation was «ordinary» and contained nothing that could cause alarm.

Then the day continued in its usual rhythm. Routine tasks, correspondence, matters that did not require special effort and did not fall outside the standard scenario. Formally, nothing difficult was happening, but everything was given *что* heavier than usual, as if a thin but noticeable layer of resistance had arisen between you and your usual clarity. Each action required a little more effort, each thought came together a little more slowly, and this barely noticeable deviation gradually became the background of the day.

And you, as happens almost always, found an explanation for this without dwelling on it longer than necessary. Fatigue, lack of sleep, the weather, accumulated tasks, ordinary human workload. These explanations sounded convincing enough not to reconsider the very structure of what was happening, and the day continued without inner analysis.

The second contact occurred during the day. A calm, businesslike conversation, without emotional coloring and without inner tension. Everything passed smoothly, correctly, neutrally, and after it your state became the same — even, stable, but not renewed. You did not feel any worsening, but you also did not return to the original clarity with which you had started the morning. You remained inside an already changed state, not noticing the very moment when it had become different.

By evening, a third conversation took place. With a person after whom you usually feel lighter, clearer, and freer. And indeed, after the interaction there appeared a sensation of air, inner expansion, thought became faster, attention more alive, and for a short time there arose a feeling of restored clarity. And it was precisely in this contrast that you, for the first time, truly felt how tired you were, because a point of comparison appeared.

If you look at the day as a whole, there was nothing in it that could explain such fatigue. No overloads, no crises, no exceptional events. An ordinary day, similar to thousands of others, in which nothing happens externally, but much changes internally. And that is why at the end of the day you again tell yourself the familiar phrase that you are simply tired, although in reality the fatigue here has a completely different nature.

You are tired not from tasks. You are tired from the sequence of states into which different people imperceptibly led you throughout the day. And these states are not felt as separate events, because you are accustomed to thinking of people as characters, roles, and personalities, whereas for your inner state they are a different phenomenon — sources of influence that change your background without prior notice.

After some people, inside becomes denser and heavier; after others, more even and calmer; after third ones, clarity and energy appear, and all of this happens regardless of the topics of conversation and the content of the words. What matters is not what was said, but the inner state in which you found yourself after the contact.

And it is precisely here that the main error of perception arises, which makes this process invisible. You explain fatigue by tasks, by the number of responsibilities, by external workload, but almost never consider the sequence of contacts itself as a factor shaping your state. You live the day no longer from yourself, but from the states that were transmitted to you during communication, and that is why you are sometimes surprised why you get tired without an obvious reason and why on other days you retain energy even under a high workload.

It becomes clear that the usual logic of evaluating the day by the amount accomplished does not reflect the real picture of what is happening. Your state is subject to a different system of measurement, in which the key role is played not by the volume of tasks, but by the quality of the contacts you pass through, because each of them leaves behind not words, but an inner trace.

And then it gradually becomes obvious what previously remained beyond attention: you never live a day in isolation from other people, because your state is continuously formed through interaction with them, and it is this imperceptible process that determines what you call your fatigue at the end of the day.

The effect that you have almost always felt but rarely could explain reveals itself in the most ordinary days, when nothing special happens and life flows in its usual rhythm. You may communicate with several people during one day and each time imperceptibly become slightly different. After one conversation, thoughts slow down and become more viscous; after another, you retain an even, functional state; and after a third, there suddenly appears a feeling of clarity, breadth, and inner movement, as if the space inside becomes larger. And precisely because this happens constantly and almost unnoticed, you do not attach importance to it.

We are accustomed to explaining our state by events, tasks, and workload, but if you look carefully, it becomes clear that the decisive role is played not by what you did, but by whom you interacted with. It is not tasks that form your inner state during the day, but the people through whom this state constantly changes.

In the evening, you almost always sum up the day incorrectly. You look at the number of completed tasks and from this draw a conclusion about your fatigue or productivity. But it would be far more accurate to look not at the list of tasks, but at the list of contacts, because it is this that reflects the real dynamics of your state. You get tired not from actions as such, but from how many times during the day your inner state was changed.

Sometimes this begins almost in the morning, when the day has not yet had time to unfold, and inside there already appears a light, hard-to-catch shadow, not connected with events or tasks. Formally, everything is fine, there are no reasons for tension, but the feeling is already shifted, as if the inner background has become slightly denser. A person continues to live on without fixing this moment, because they have no grounds to believe that something has happened.

During the day, he encounters ordinary situations, performs familiar actions, and outwardly everything looks normal. But by evening a state arises that seems disproportionate to the day lived, as if more fatigue has accumulated inside than can be explained by what actually happened. And then the familiar mechanism of explanation turns on: fatigue, overload, a long day, the need for rest. This explanation is convenient because it closes the question without requiring a deeper look.

But one simple and uncomfortable fact remains, which is difficult to ignore if you begin to observe more carefully: sometimes after an easy day a person feels heaviness, and sometimes after a busy and difficult day clarity and even energy remain inside. And this discrepancy indicates that the cause is not where it is usually sought.

Almost always we evaluate the day through actions, through the number of completed tasks, through visible activity. But the human state is structured differently. It is formed not so much by events as by the people who are embedded in those events. Each contact imperceptibly changes the inner state, even if outwardly it looks like an ordinary conversation or neutral interaction.

If you begin to track this, it becomes obvious that after some people tension or heaviness remains inside; after others a stable calm arises; and after third ones a feeling of clarity and inner expansion appears. At the same time, the content of the conversation may be completely the same — mundane, neutral, devoid of emotional accents. But the result inside turns out to be different, and it is precisely this difference that points to a hidden mechanism of influence.

Gradually it becomes clear that a person never remains unchanged during the day. They constantly shift between states, and each shift is connected with a contact they enter into. These

changes are so familiar that they are not perceived as separate events, although it is precisely they that form the final feeling of the day.

You may live through a day in which there were only a few conversations, but it is they that will determine the inner outcome. One contact makes the state more tense, another evens it out, a third unexpectedly activates and restores clarity. And all of this adds up into a single trajectory, which a person then mistakenly explains as fatigue from tasks.

Here the key error of perception arises. A person looks at their day as a sequence of tasks and events, but in reality they live through not so much actions as a chain of inner changes. And these changes do not occur by themselves, but through other people who imperceptibly participate in shaping their state.

If one day you begin to notice this, it becomes clear that fatigue is rarely a direct consequence of work. It is almost always connected with the quantity and quality of contacts through which a person's inner state has passed. Because it is precisely these contacts that form the space inside in which they then think, act, and make decisions. And then the very logic of perception gradually changes. The day ceases to be just a set of tasks and becomes a sequence of influences, in which each person leaves their trace, and it is from these traces that the state a person calls themselves at the end of the day is formed. It is precisely at this moment that a process begins which is almost never directly registered by consciousness, but constantly manifests itself in the feeling of one's own state. Each contact with another person requires inner adjustment — an imperceptible adaptation, alignment, and attunement to the emotional and psychological background that was brought from outside. This is not perceived as effort because it happens automatically, but it is precisely here that a significant part of the inner resource is spent. That is why after some people a person feels collected and clear, as if there is more space and silence inside for their own thoughts, while after others fatigue arises, even if the conversation was short and outwardly unremarkable. The difference arises not because of the content of the words, but because of how much inner tension is required to maintain one's own stability next to another state.

Gradually it becomes obvious that communication cannot be considered a neutral exchange of information. In reality, it is always an exchange of states, in which one person inevitably influences the inner organization of another. And this influence is rarely instantly noticeable, because it occurs not through obvious emotions or events, but through a subtle restructuring of attention, the tempo of thinking, and the level of inner tension.

If you look at the day as a whole, it becomes clear that such changes occur not once, but many times. Each contact leaves its own trace, and these traces do not disappear without a trace, but layer on top of one another, forming the person's overall state by the evening. That is why the resulting fatigue is far from always connected with the number of completed tasks, because the decisive factor becomes not the volume of actions, but the number of inner shifts a person has gone through during the day.

And in this, a hidden system of exchange gradually becomes apparent, in which each person, without realizing it, continuously interacts not only with words, but with states. They give away part of their inner stability, take in someone else's tension or clarity, adapt, align themselves, and then lose balance again in the next contact. And it is precisely this imperceptible sequence of exchanges that determines what their inner state becomes at the end of the day, even if outwardly they have done nothing that could be called a significant event.

Chapter 2. What a «State» Is and Why It Can Be Changed

A person rarely thinks about what exactly they call their state, although in essence it is precisely this that constitutes the fabric of their life at any given moment. They say that they feel good or bad, that they are tired or full of energy, that they are calm or anxious, and these words seem sufficient to them to describe what is happening. But behind them lies a much more complex inner system that is continuously restructuring under the influence of many factors, and above all — under the influence of other people.

If you try to describe the state more precisely, it becomes clear that it is never a single emotion and not a single thought. It is simultaneously the work of attention, bodily sensations, the emotional background, the speed of thinking, and the overall level of inner energy. All these elements do not exist separately; they constantly influence one another, creating a dynamic system that can change even during a single conversation. And that is why a state is almost never stable. It is in constant motion, even if a person does not notice it, and the direction of this motion is determined not only by what they do, but also by whom they are in contact with and where their attention is directed at that moment.

Attention in this system plays the role of a hidden control center, although a person rarely perceives it as such. Attention can be imagined as an inner flow that is always directed somewhere, and it is precisely there that a person's entire subjective reality gradually shifts. Where attention is, there also is the main part of their life at that moment.

In the process of communication, attention inevitably restructures itself. A person listens, reacts, interprets, catches intonations, tries to understand subtext, and all of this requires a constant internal distribution of resources. They may remain outwardly calm, but inside their attention is already adapting to the rhythm and state of the other person. That is why contact with an anxious, tense, or emotionally overloaded person often leads to an inner contraction of attention. Thoughts become faster but less stable, the inner rhythm is disrupted, and after such communication a person often feels fatigue, even if outwardly nothing difficult or physically demanding occurred.

And conversely, contact with a person who is calm, structured, and internally collected leads to the opposite effect. Attention evens out, becomes more stable, and inside there arises a feeling of space in which it is easier to think and act. This is not motivation or inspiration in the usual sense, but rather a restoration of inner organization.

Thus, attention ceases to be merely a tool of perception and becomes an active resource that is constantly redistributed in the process of communication and directly influences what the person's final state turns out to be. But attention is only one layer. Each contact also leaves another, less noticeable trace inside, which is not always expressed as a specific emotion. It may manifest as a slight inner tension, a change in the rhythm of thoughts, or a shift in the overall background of perception that cannot be precisely named, but can easily be felt.

After communicating with a person who constantly transmits anxiety, dissatisfaction, or tension, a person does not necessarily experience explicit irritation. However, inside there often remains a feeling of heaviness, as if reality itself becomes denser and less permeable. And this state can persist significantly longer than the conversation itself.

In opposite cases, contact with a person who is calm and internally stable does not always evoke strong emotions, but it can imperceptibly bring the inner background into balance. After such communication there arises a feeling of composure, as if perception has become more transparent and ordered.

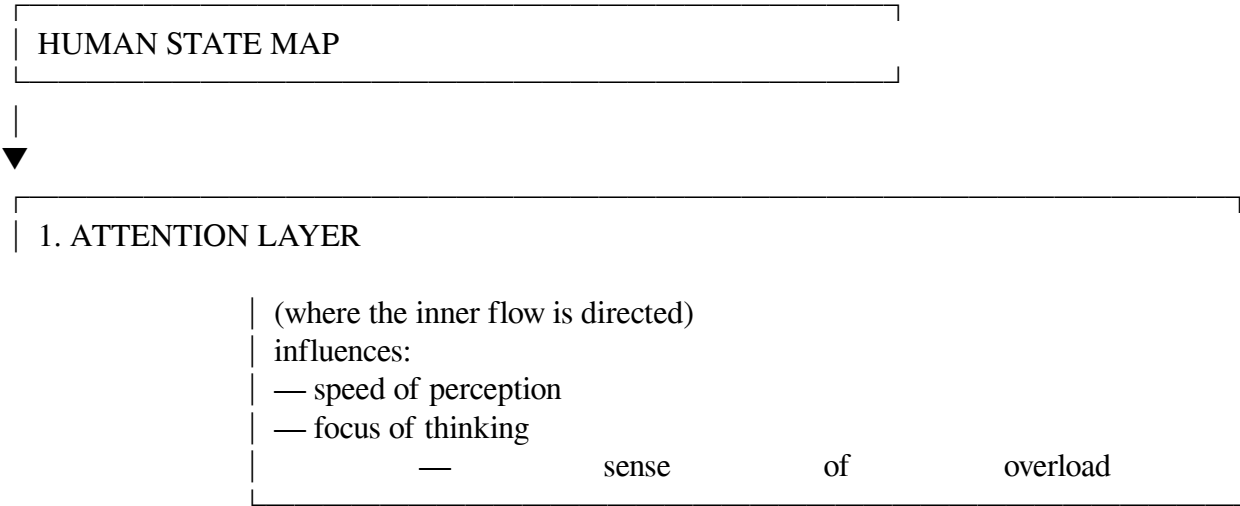
These traces are rarely registered separately, but it is precisely their sum that forms the final state of the day, which a person then describes as fatigue, calmness, or tension. There is also another layer that is almost never consciously recognized, but significantly affects the feeling of fatigue — cognitive load, that is, the amount of inner work required to process communication.

Each person requires a certain effort to understand their speech, logic, emotional dynamics, and way of thinking. And this effort can vary greatly depending on how predictable and structured the contact itself is. Communication with a person who is clear, consistent, and internally organized requires minimal processing. We easily retain their meaning without spending extra resources on interpretation. Whereas contact with a contradictory, emotionally unstable, or chaotic person forces a constant restructuring of the internal model of understanding what is happening in order to maintain the integrity of the conversation.

And that is why after some interactions there arises a feeling of overload, even if outwardly nothing difficult happened. At that moment, the brain is not only working with information but also constantly trying to stabilize the very process of understanding another person. If we bring all these layers together, it becomes possible to see a kind of map of state in which attention, emotional background, cognitive load, and the level of inner energy coexist simultaneously. And this map never remains unchanged, because it is constantly coming into contact with other such maps — the maps of other people.

That is why two externally similar conversations can lead to completely different inner consequences. Because it is not just words and meanings that interact, but entire systems of states that influence one another at a level rarely accessible to direct awareness. And as soon as a person begins to notice this, their perception gradually changes. The state ceases to seem random and begins to be perceived as a natural result of the contacts in which they participate, even if before these connections remained outside of attention.

Human State Map (diagram)



| 2. EMOTIONAL LAYER

(overall experiential background)

forms:

— lightness / heaviness

— anxiety / calmness

—

irritation

/

clarity

|



| 3. COGNITIVE LAYER

(information processing)

determines:

— clarity of thinking

— speed of decisions

— level of mental fatigue

|



| 4. ENERGY LAYER

(subjective resource)

felt as:

— «I have energy»

- | — «I feel empty inside»
- | — «I want to act / to disappear»



| 5. PHYSICAL (BODY) LAYER

(physical reflection of state)

- | manifests as:
- | — tension
- | — breathing
- | — bodily fatigue / lightness

#####

Core principle of the model

EVERY PERSON → INFLUENCES ALL LAYERS AT ONCE

or in a more precise formulation:

CONTACT WITH A PERSON

↓

change in attention + emotions + thinking

↓

redistribution of inner energy

↓

change in bodily state

↓

FINAL STATE OF THE DAY

So, each person you interact with does not add a separate thought or emotion to you. They restructure your entire internal state system, and most often this happens so imperceptibly that you do not register the moment of change itself. You only notice the result — how you suddenly began to think more slowly, more quickly, more heavily, or more clearly, even though, in your view, nothing obvious actually happened.

If you try to examine state not as a feeling, but as a system, it becomes clear that a person never exists in a fixed point. They are constantly in a process of internal readjustment in which each new contact with another person slightly shifts the architecture of their attention, emotional background, and way of thinking. These shifts are too small to be noticeable individually, but it is precisely them that form the final state of the day.

Therefore, state cannot be perceived as a stable background that simply accompanies life. It is a dynamic system that is continuously assembled from a multitude of micro-influences, most of which remain outside of awareness. And yet it is precisely they that determine how a person feels by the evening — whether collected, exhausted, clear, or scattered.

If we look at this system more closely, it becomes obvious that its elements do not exist in isolation. Attention influences the emotional background, the emotional background changes the speed of thinking, thinking determines the sense of energy, and the level of energy is reflected in the body. All of this happens not sequentially, but simultaneously, as a single continuous process of internal organization. And within this integrated picture, it is especially important to see what usually escapes attention: the most frequent factor of state change is not an event or a task, but contact with another person.

When you enter into a conversation, you are not simply exchanging information. You enter into a process of mutual adjustment of internal systems. This adjustment does not require your consent and does not depend on conscious choice, because the psyche automatically strives to adapt to the context it enters. If this context is stable and calm, the system gradually evens out, attention stabilizes, and thinking becomes more organized. If, however, the context is tense, chaotic, or emotionally overloaded, the system begins to operate in a mode of internal compensation, even if outwardly you continue to appear calm and composed.

Therefore, a person can have a short conversation and feel a noticeable heaviness of state, not because the conversation itself was difficult, but because their internal system was forced to reorganize itself according to someone else's dynamics. And in the same way, they can have an ordinary conversation and feel relief, because in that moment their system did not resist but synchronized with a more stable and orderly state of the other person.

Gradually it becomes obvious that fatigue is rarely the result of a single specific event. It is almost always formed as the sum of small internal changes occurring throughout the day through different contacts, through different types of presence of other people, through different states a person comes into contact with. If we combine this observation, it becomes clear that a person does not live only within their tasks and actions. They are constantly inside a field of influences where each contact either expands their inner space or contracts it. And it is precisely this imperceptible accumulation of changes that forms the state they at the end of the day perceive as their own.

At this moment, the state map ceases to be merely a descriptive model and becomes a tool of observation. A person begins to notice that different interactions leave different traces: some make them more collected and clear, others more scattered and tired. And this observation gradually moves them out of automatic mode of living, because they begin to see not only external events but also internal reactions to them. And along with this, the first real step toward managing one's own state appears, because it is impossible to manage what remains outside the field of attention.

And this is where the key idea of the chapter lies: a person's state does not arise randomly and does not exist on its own. It is formed in the process of continuous interaction with other people, and the more attentively a person begins to track these interactions, the more clearly they see that their fatigue, energy, clarity, and inner sense of life always have concrete sources — even if previously they remained unnoticed.

Chapter 3. The Mechanism of Energy Contagion (Scientific Basis)

If you look at a person from the outside, it may seem that they make decisions independently, that their thoughts arise within themselves, and that their mood belongs only to them — like a closed territory into which no one can enter without permission. But the more attentive the observation, the more this illusion of autonomy begins to break down.

A person enters a space with other people and after a short time already notices that their speech changes speed, their thoughts become sharper or, on the contrary, slower, confidence appears or sudden inner tension arises, although outwardly nothing has happened that could explain this. They read a message and feel irritation or anxiety, although the words themselves are neutral. They are simply рядом with someone — and gradually discover that their inner state no longer fully belongs to them. And it is precisely here that a fundamental question of human experience arises: where does the «self» end and where does the influence of other people begin, if the boundary between them turns out to be far more permeable than is commonly assumed.

Modern neuroscience offers one of the possible keys to this phenomenon through the discovery of mirror neurons, described in the work of Giacomo Rizzolatti and his colleagues. These neural mechanisms are activated not only when a person performs an action themselves, but also when they observe this action in another. In other words, the brain does not simply observe the external world — it partially reproduces it within itself.

That is why another person's smile causes in us a faint internal reflection of that smile, even if we are not aware of it. A tense person nearby can cause bodily contraction without a single word. Another person's calmness, on the contrary, gradually restructures the inner rhythm, creating a feeling of stabilization. And although in scientific language this is described as a mechanism of learning through observation, in subjective experience it is lived much more broadly — as a constant internal reflection of other people within one's own psyche.

But mirror neurons are only one level. There is an even more everyday and less noticeable process that a person experiences daily — emotional attunement. The brain automatically adapts the inner state to the emotional background of those around, without asking permission and without waiting for a conscious choice.

If an anxious person is nearby, the psyche begins to search for the source of anxiety, even if there are no objective reasons. If a calm and collected person is nearby, inside there arises a feeling of support, even if the external situation remains the same. This is not a decision and not a strategy — it is an automatic adjustment of the system that occurs faster than rational explanation has time to engage.

Psychology calls this emotional synchronization. Research shows that people who are in the same space gradually begin to align their emotional rhythms, even without direct interaction. That is why families, work teams, and groups of friends over time acquire a shared emotional background that is felt almost physically, although it cannot be reduced to a single specific cause.

Above this level there is yet another — social adaptation, which a person almost never perceives as pressure. This is not direct coercion and not conscious submission. It is a subtle, continuous adjustment of behavior to the context of the group in which a person is located.

The tone of voice changes, the tempo of speech, the degree of confidence, the form of reaction, and sometimes even thoughts themselves begin to move in a direction that more easily aligns with the surrounding environment. A person does not notice this as a change — they perceive it as natural behavior in a particular situation.

The classic experiments of Solomon Asch on conformity showed how easily a person begins to doubt the obvious if the group around demonstrates unified confidence in the opposite. And even with inner disagreement, the behavioral and emotional level gradually shifts toward the group, because for the brain the social environment is not just a background, but a factor of safety.

If these levels are combined, a more integrated picture emerges. A person produces their state «from within» much less often than they think. More often, they reflect it, read it, and adapt to it — automatically, continuously, without internal discussion.

That is why рядом with some people a person becomes clearer, more collected, and faster, while рядом with others they gradually lose concentration, even if outwardly the conversation does not differ from an ordinary one. They are not simply thinking — they are constantly synchronizing with other systems of state around them. And then it becomes clear why after certain meetings a person feels not just fatigue, but a slight sense of displacement, as if they have become slightly not themselves. Because during these contacts their inner processes temporarily ceased to be autonomous and began to follow someone else's rhythm, someone else's logic, someone else's emotional state.

And the more often this happens during the day, the more fatigue accumulates, even if outwardly nothing significant has occurred. Because the main load at this moment is not actions and not events. The main load is the constant invisible readjustment of oneself to other people.

If we begin to view this not as an exception, but as a basic mechanism of human existence, it becomes clear that a person lives in a field of continuous influence, where each interaction leaves a trace in their state, even if this trace cannot be immediately recognized or named.

And that is why sometimes there arises a strange feeling that the day passed calmly, but inside something has changed. As if you remained the same person — and at the same time, no longer quite the same. This shift is almost never abrupt. It is formed from many micro-signals: glances, intonations, short phrases, the general background of other people's presence. And it is precisely their subtlety that makes this process so powerful.

If we return to the idea of mirror neurons, it becomes clear that the brain does not simply reflect the actions of other people. It constantly tries to predict their inner state in order to navigate the social environment. And therefore a significant part of its work is connected not with thinking as such, but with the continuous reading of other people.

This reading requires resources. Each person nearby is a complex system of signals that the brain must interpret: how safe, predictable, stable, or chaotic it is. And depending on this, it constantly readjusts the inner state. When there are many such signals during the day, the system begins to operate in a mode of continuous adaptation, as if a person is constantly finding themselves in a new environment that must be understood anew and to which they must adjust again.

The peculiarity of this process is that a person almost never notices it in the moment. They may spend the day among different people and at the end say that the day was ordinary, unremarkable, yet by evening discover fatigue, irritation, or a strange inner emptiness for which it is impossible to find a specific event as a cause. And it is precisely here that one of the key paradoxes of human experience becomes visible: the most significant changes of state almost never occur in major events; they are formed from micro-contacts that are not perceived as anything substantial.

A short conversation in a corridor, several messages in correspondence, a casually thrown phrase, an intonation you did not have time to track — all of this is not registered by consciousness as significant events, but it is from such elements that the overall emotional and cognitive background of the day is gradually formed. And this background ultimately becomes what a person calls their state.

Modern research in social psychology and cognitive science increasingly shows that a person is not a fully autonomous system in the social space. Their thinking, emotional reactions, and even the decisions they make are formed in constant interaction with the surrounding environment, and first of all — with other people. What once might have been perceived as a philosophical metaphor is today increasingly described as an observable neurophysiological and behavioral fact.

The brain does not exist in isolation. It is always embedded in a social context and continuously adapts to it, even in cases when a person is not aware of it. And gradually from this grows a rather radical, but logically inevitable understanding: a person controls their state far less than they think. More often, they do not consciously form their mood, but read it and adopt it from the surrounding environment — through other people, through their emotional background, through their inner organization or chaos.

This is precisely what explains why, without visible reasons, a person may feel collected and clear on some days, and scattered or tired on others. And if this model is accepted not as a hypothesis but as a practical way of observation, the next step becomes possible — the transition from merely experiencing a state to becoming aware of it at the moment it is forming.

Because as soon as a person begins to notice the process of energetic and emotional influence in real time, their perception of their own state changes. It ceases to be a random set of sensations and begins to be perceived as the result of specific interactions that can be distinguished, tracked, and gradually understood. And at this moment, a subtler layer of what is happening reveals itself. It is not only that a person adopts another's state, and not even only that they attune to it. A significant part of the process lies in the fact that they complete it.

When you find yourself рядом with a person whose inner state is unstable, fragmented, or anxious, your psyche does not limit itself to simply reading this background. It strives to structure it. The brain constantly seeks coherence and predictability, and therefore it automatically begins to «complete» another's state into a form that it can hold and understand.

And it is here that a hidden load arises, which is almost never recognized as a separate process. You begin to spend internal resources not only on the contact itself, but also on making another person's state more coherent and predictable for your own perception. That is why after certain conversations there appears a feeling of fatigue that is not connected with the content of the discussion, because in fact you were involved in a much deeper work — the internal stabilization of another person's psychological dynamics.

If we look at this from this perspective, it becomes clear why some people are perceived as «light» and others as «heavy,» even if outwardly their speech and behavior do not differ radically. A light person is someone whose state is already internally integrated and does not require additional cognitive and emotional completion from you. A heavy person is someone whose state remains disjointed, and in their presence you involuntarily begin to spend your own attention and energy on holding it in a more comprehensible form.

The longer such contact continues, the more the feeling of inner exhaustion accumulates, because you gradually cease to be simply a participant in communication and begin to perform the function of a stabilizing element of another person's inner system.

And here another effect appears, which people often feel intuitively but rarely can articulate precisely. Sometimes you leave a person not because they said something difficult or unpleasant, but because in their presence you begin to lose your own clarity. Your inner space seems to become filled with another's dynamics, and it becomes more difficult for you to maintain your usual concentration and stability.

This is one of the subtlest forms of redistribution of internal resources, in which there is no direct transfer of emotions in the usual sense. What is happening is a constant work of maintaining contact and at the same time preserving your own integrity within this contact.

If we assemble all of this into a single picture, it becomes clear that communication is not simply an exchange of words and not merely an exchange of states. It is a complex process of jointly constructing an inner reality, in which for a time a unified field of interaction is formed that influences both participants. And that is why the influence of other people turns out to be so deep and often

underestimated, because at the moment of contact the boundary between «self» and «other» becomes far more permeable than is usually realized.

PART II. TYPES OF PEOPLE BY INFLUENCE

Chapter 4. People Who Strengthen

If you carefully observe your own life, you may notice one subtle but persistent fact: different people influence our inner state in different ways, and this difference is rarely connected to their words, actions, or even their attitude toward us. It manifests more deeply — in who we become in their presence.

There are people after communicating with whom there arises an almost imperceptible but very precise feeling of returning to yourself, yet this «self» is already different — more collected, clearer, internally balanced. This state is difficult to describe through familiar emotional categories, because it resembles neither joy, nor inspiration, nor excitement. Rather, it is a form of inner cognitive quiet in which thinking becomes cleaner and perception more structured and precise.

After contact with such people, one sometimes notices the effect of a quiet strengthening of mental clarity: thoughts are formulated more easily, complex ideas are grasped more quickly, and connections between previously unrelated elements of reality begin to appear. There arises an almost elusive feeling of intellectual collectedness, as if the very level of information processing temporarily becomes higher.

There are people in whose presence the world ceases to feel chaotic even without explanations or advice, because their presence itself sets a structure of perception in which uncertainty seems to become ordered. In cognitive psychology, such phenomena are sometimes described as the effect of cognitive synchronization, when one person involuntarily begins to adjust their ways of thinking to the more stable or more systemic cognitive model of another. In neuroscience, this is associated with mechanisms of joint attention and alignment of cognitive rhythms, in which the nervous system adapts its activity to a more stable interaction pattern. This is precisely why after certain conversations a person may unexpectedly find it easy to understand complex things without direct explanations, as if the structure of thinking itself temporarily becomes more organized.

There is also another type of influence, less noticeable but no less fundamental, which is not connected with the acceleration of thinking or intellectual stimulation, but manifests as the emergence of inner stability. In the presence of certain people, it does not necessarily become emotionally easier, but it becomes quieter inside. Background tension decreases, cognitive noise is reduced, and a feeling of support appears, as if the psychological system exits a constant mode of alertness. Research in social psychophysiology shows that the human nervous system constantly reads signals of safety and adapts the level of internal tension to the social environment. Therefore, even the passive presence of a calm and stable person can reduce stress reactions, making breathing deeper, thinking less reactive, and emotional responses more stable. As a result, reality subjectively becomes less overloaded.

The most complex and interesting effect appears where it is not the speed or stability of thinking that changes, but its scale. After communicating with some people, familiar situations cease to be perceived linearly, and the ability appears to hold several levels of meaning simultaneously — to see not only what is happening, but why it is happening and how it may be connected to broader systems. This expansion of perspective is rarely felt as effort; rather, it is like a quiet shift in perception. Cognitive psychology explains this through the phenomenon of mental modeling, in which a person, being near a more systemic form of thinking, temporarily adopts its structure and uses it to interpret reality. As a result, there may arise a feeling of deeper understanding without receiving new information as such.

If we put all this together, a simple but rarely used criterion becomes obvious: it is important not only what a person says, but also who you become in their presence. There are people after interacting with whom thinking becomes clearer, more structured, and more precise, inner organization is strengthened, and the quality of perception, decisions, and actions improves. And there are people after communicating with whom emotional involvement may remain, but clarity gradually decreases, thoughts become more fragmented, attention less stable, and inner focus blurred.

If you begin to track this effect systematically, it becomes noticeable that intelligence in real life is not only knowledge and skills, but also the quality of the cognitive environment in which a person regularly exists. At a certain moment, a shift in perception occurs, in which it becomes clear that thinking is not autonomous but is constantly formed in the field of other people. And this field is not neutral, because some interactions strengthen clarity and depth, while others gradually blur them.

Then the very principle of choosing one's environment changes, where not only emotional sympathy or habitual communication comes to the foreground, but a subtler criterion: whether this person strengthens your clarity, stability, and ability to think or not. And this becomes one of the signs of cognitive maturity, expressed in the ability to notice which version of yourself you return to after contact with another person.

With careful observation, one subtle but fundamentally important distinction becomes noticeable, which usually escapes awareness because it manifests not during the interaction itself, but with a delay — some time after it. Sometimes a person may seem outwardly light, pleasant, even inspiring during a conversation, but later, when the contact has already ended, a strange feeling of cognitive defocusing arises inside: thought loses its former precision, attention becomes less collected, and the inner dialogue more noisy and fragmented.

And conversely, it can happen differently: the communication itself does not produce a vivid emotional effect, does not give an immediate uplift or impression, but after some time the person discovers that their thinking has become clearer, calmer, and more structured, as if the inner organization of perception has quietly rearranged itself. It is precisely this delayed effect that has particular value, because it points not to the emotional impression of the interaction, but to a change in cognitive architecture that continues even after the contact itself has ended.

If we consider this phenomenon through the lens of cognitive psychology, we can turn to the concept of distributed cognition, according to which human thinking is not a completely isolated process within individual consciousness, but functions as a system constantly interacting with the social environment. In this perspective, thinking is partly «located» outside the head — in dialogues, in structures of communication, in the ways other people think. Then it becomes clearer why some people are able to temporarily gather another's thinking into a more ordered form, strengthening its cognitive coherence, while others, even without displaying obvious chaos, create the effect of inner dispersion and a decrease in structural precision.

An additional dimension of this phenomenon appears in observations of work and intellectual environments, where people regularly interact under conditions of high cognitive load. There, an effect is often observed in which, after contact with certain colleagues or team members, a person's capacity for analytical thinking, formulation, and decision-making increases, and this is not connected to the transfer of new information in the direct sense. What changes is not the content of thinking, but its form.

Some neurophysiological models explain this through mechanisms of interpersonal synchronization of neurodynamic processes, in which the parameters of attention and information processing are partially aligned during interaction. Although this area remains the subject of active research, there is already sufficient data to assert that the influence of another person on cognitive processes is much deeper than the simple transfer of knowledge or information.

Returning to everyday experience, one can notice that people after whom thinking becomes clearer and more collected do not always give the impression of being bright or emotionally intense. On the contrary, they are often perceived as calm, structured, internally stable, and it is precisely in their presence that cognitive noise gradually decreases and the thinking process acquires greater precision and direction. With them, it does not necessarily become emotionally easier, but it becomes intellectually clearer, and this clarity in the long term turns out to be more significant, since it directly affects the quality of decisions, actions, and interpretations of reality.

Gradually, from this observation, a different principle of evaluating people is formed, which goes beyond the usual categories of sympathy, charisma, or emotional comfort and begins to be based on what one's own thinking becomes after interaction.

At a certain point, a person begins to notice a stable pattern: there are people after communicating with whom they understand complex things more quickly, formulate thoughts more precisely, and structure uncertainty more easily, and there are people after whom, despite the absence of obvious discomfort, thinking becomes less collected and more fragmented. It is here that a key shift in perception occurs, in which the focus moves from the emotional effect of interaction to its cognitive consequence.

And if this logic is developed fully, it becomes clear that the social environment is not merely a background for communication, but a cognitive medium that either strengthens the structural quality of thinking or gradually blurs it. In the long term, this effect influences not only emotional state, but also the quality of decisions, the trajectory of actions, and overall intellectual stability.

Sometimes this mechanism can be traced in a very simple everyday observation: a person finishes a conversation, returns to work or a task, and suddenly discovers that attention has become more stable, thoughts align more easily, and complex problems are perceived as less chaotic than before. At the same time, they rarely connect this change with the recent communication, although it may have been precisely that which became the point of cognitive shift, after which the inner system moved into a more ordered mode of functioning.

In studies of group dynamics and cognitive psychology, such effects are partly described through the phenomenon of cognitive uplift, in which the presence of more structured forms of thinking in the social space improves the quality of individual cognitive processes. This is especially noticeable in educational and professional environments, where the presence of even one participant with a high degree of clarity of thinking can change the overall cognitive dynamics of the group.

This is precisely why in effective teams not only the level of knowledge is valued, but also the quality of thinking that a person brings into the space of interaction, because it begins to influence others even without direct teaching or transmission of information.

If we translate this into the language of everyday experience, it becomes noticeable: some people do not simply participate in our thinking — they temporarily change its structure. In their presence, thoughts begin to arrange themselves into a more coherent and stable sequence, scattered ideas lose their chaotic quality, and the inner dialogue becomes quieter, more precise, and less fragmented.

Importantly, this is rarely connected to direct explanations or advice. On the contrary, such people may speak little, but their way of being present — how they hold a pause, how they formulate thoughts, how they respond to uncertainty — sets a particular order to which another person's thinking gradually «adjusts.»

Here a question arises that radically changes the usual understanding of communication: if after some people thinking becomes clearer and more collected, and after others more scattered and fragmented, can we still consider intelligence to be an exclusively individual trait? Or is it, to a significant extent, an effect of the environment in which this intelligence continuously functions?

And the more attentively a person begins to track this difference, the more clearly they see that their ability to analyze, formulate, and make decisions is shaped not only by internal skills, but also by the quality of the cognitive space into which they regularly enter. In other words, thinking turns out to be not an isolated process, but a system sensitive to whose field it unfolds within.

Gradually, from this observation, a practical, at first almost imperceptible conclusion emerges, which over time changes the very logic of choosing communication. A person begins to notice that some conversations do not simply leave an emotional trace, but continue to influence the quality of thinking hours and even days after they end.

What previously seemed like a random change in mood is now recognized as a stable cognitive effect: some interactions strengthen clarity, structure, and precision of thinking, while others gradually blur them, even if outwardly they remain neutral, socially comfortable, or even pleasant. And the more clearly this becomes noticeable, the more the criterion for choosing people changes: emotional attractiveness of communication gives way to its cognitive aftereffect — what thinking remains like after the contact.

There is also another, more subtle and almost paradoxical effect that many people intuitively recognize but rarely can describe precisely. Sometimes after a conversation with a certain person there is a feeling that nothing fundamentally new was said, and yet inside, what was already known becomes clearer. Thoughts that previously existed as scattered fragments suddenly gather into a coherent structure, and a strange feeling arises not of acquiring new information, but of restoring access to already existing knowledge.

At this moment it becomes clear that the matter is not the transfer of data, but the restructuring of access to one's own thinking.

Such people do not so much add new ideas as remove the internal interference that prevents these ideas from manifesting. They act not as a source of information, but as a factor of calibration — bringing thinking into a state of greater transparency in which existing connections become visible.

Sometimes this manifests very concretely: a person finishes a conversation and after some time discovers that a decision which had long remained uncertain and «felt at the edge of consciousness» suddenly takes the form of a clear conclusion without additional effort. And at this moment a characteristic illusion arises: as if nothing significant happened. But in fact, a subtle restructuring of the cognitive environment has occurred, in which thinking has become less noisy and more accessible to itself.

If we consider this phenomenon more broadly, it becomes clear why such people are perceived not as carriers of information, but as amplifiers of clarity. Their influence does not add new thoughts — it increases the resolution of already existing thinking.

And it is precisely here that a key shift in perception occurs: a person begins to understand that communication is not only an exchange of meanings, but also a constant tuning of the cognitive apparatus through other people.

And if this logic is followed to the end, it becomes obvious that the social environment is not a background or context, but an active cognitive medium that either strengthens the structural quality of thinking or gradually blurs it. In the long term, this influence turns out to be more significant than individual conversations or episodes of communication, because it shapes a stable style of thinking: its speed, depth, precision, and capacity to handle complexity.

Sometimes this mechanism becomes noticeable in the simplest situations. A person finishes a conversation, returns to work, and suddenly discovers that their attention has become more stable, thoughts arrange themselves more easily, and complex tasks no longer feel overloaded and confusing. And only upon closer observation does it become clear: this is not a random state, but a continuation of the cognitive shift initiated by an interaction that has formally already ended, yet continues to unfold internally.

In studies of group dynamics and cognitive psychology, such effects are partially described through the phenomenon of cognitive uplift: the presence of more structured thinking in the environment can enhance the quality of individual cognitive processes. This is especially evident in educational settings, professional teams, and stable intellectual communities, where even one person with a high degree of clarity of thought can change the overall thinking dynamics of the group.

This is why in mature teams, not only intelligence as a set of knowledge is valued, but also the quality of thinking as a form of presence. Because thinking is not only what a person knows, but also how they influence the way others think.

Chapter 5. People Who Drain

Sooner or later, it becomes obvious that people influence one another much more deeply than is commonly assumed. There are interactions after which a person seems to become slightly more collected, clearer, and internally steadier, and there are others after which, for no visible reason, a subtle feeling of losing inner volume arises — as if something has quietly leaked away, although outwardly nothing significant happened, and the conversation itself may have been entirely ordinary. And the most difficult feature of this phenomenon is that depletion is almost never recognized in the moment. It does not look like depletion. It disguises itself as normal communication, participation, involvement, even care — and that is precisely why it remains unnoticed until it accumulates.

One of the most common forms of such hidden influence is constant complaining. On the surface, it may look like a simple expression of experiences, an attempt to be understood, or to receive support, but its psychological dynamics are usually deeper than the content of the words. When a person keeps their attention for a long time in the field of problems, difficulties, injustice, or fatigue, they are not merely describing reality — they are stabilizing their thinking within this problematic context. And in the process of dialogue, the interlocutor, even without agreeing with the content, begins involuntarily to share the very structure of this attention.

In cognitive psychology, this is associated with the effects of sustained attentional fixation: when consciousness lingers for a long time on a problematic object, it loses part of its flexibility and begins to reproduce the same interpretative trajectories. And it is precisely this form of thinking that is easily transmitted in conversation. That is why after prolonged communication with a person who complains a lot, there often arises not so much an emotional reaction as a shift in the inner background: subjectively, the world becomes heavier, denser, although the objective circumstances remain unchanged.

Anxiety as a form of cognitive rhythm deserves special attention. This is not always a direct complaint and not necessarily explicit worry — more often it is a hidden structure of thinking in which reality is constantly checked for threats, risks, and potential mistakes. Even neutral topics in such interaction gradually acquire a shade of tension, because attention returns again and again to what might go wrong. And at this moment, a subtle process of synchronization occurs: the nervous system of the interlocutor begins to adapt to this rhythm, even if at the level of consciousness it is neither accepted nor shared.

Studies of emotional contagion show that the human nervous system is extremely sensitive to signals of threat in the speech and behavior of other people. From an evolutionary perspective, this was a survival mechanism, and therefore even weak markers of anxiety can trigger internal tension responses. That is why after communicating with an anxious person, there sometimes remains a feeling of inexplicable fatigue, as if the person had mentally lived through several scenarios of possible problems that never actually occurred.

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