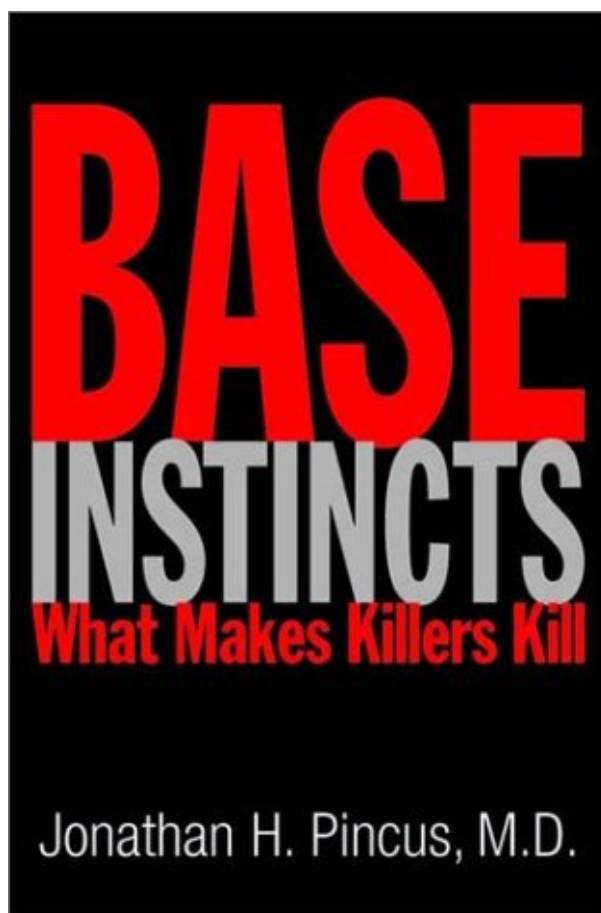
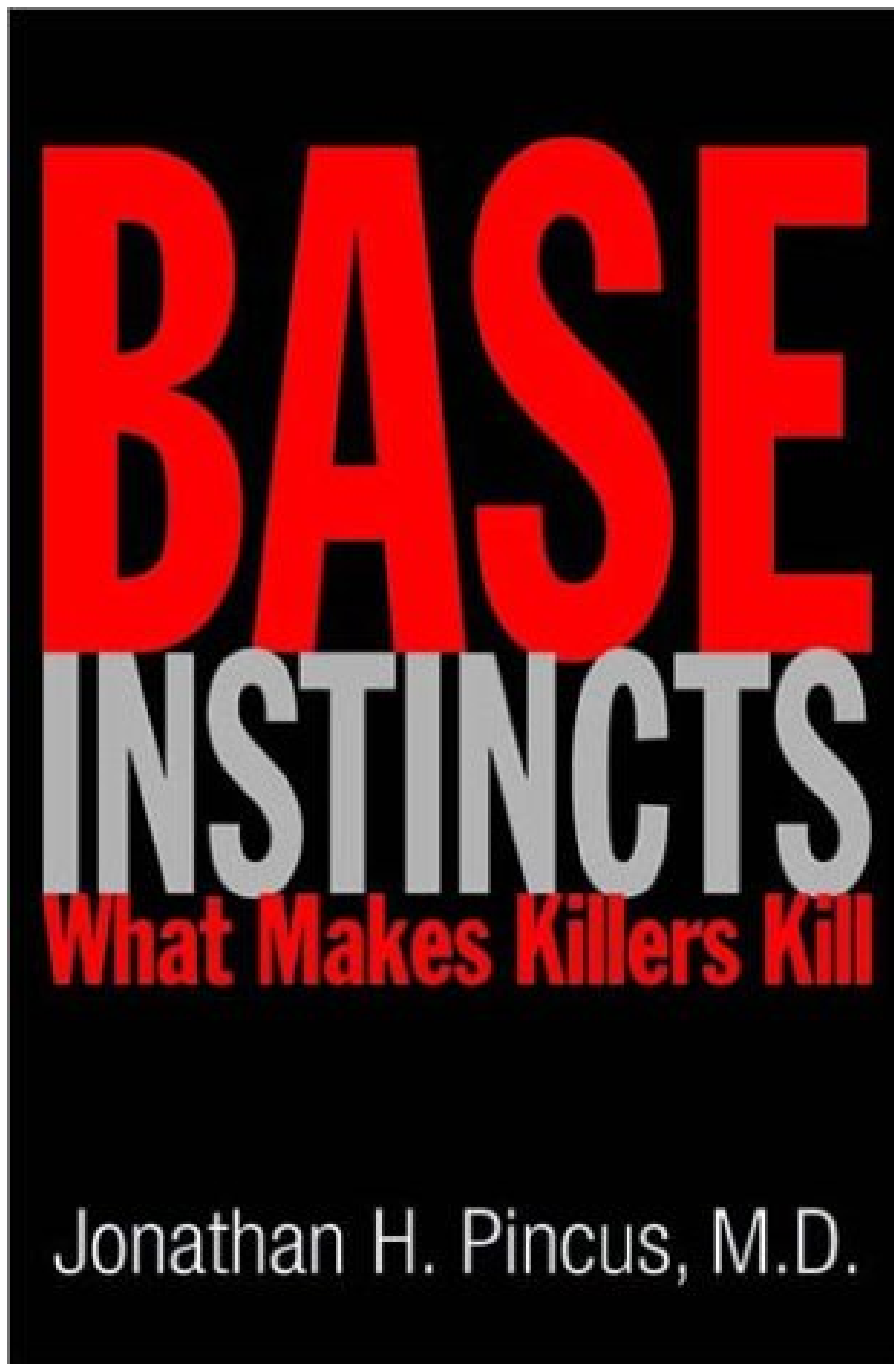


**BASE INSTINCTS: WHAT MAKES KILLERS
KILL? BY JONATHAN H. PINCUS**



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From Publishers Weekly

Pincus explores the biological, psychological and social influences at work within the minds of contemporary murderers in this collection of case studies. Chairman emeritus of Georgetown University's Department of Neurology, he notes that although he spent years as a "regular" neurologist studying violent criminals, his prejudices (and those of his colleagues) colored his study of criminal cognition and behavior. His longtime collaborator, Dr. Dorothy Lewis, helped him develop a new theory: "It is the interaction of childhood abuse with neurologic disturbances and psychiatric illnesses that explains murder." He presents several cases from the approximately 150 murderers he has examined, detailing the subtle interrelations between these three elements, which often go unnoticed because of violent individuals' denial of their own past victimization. Pincus delves into how the disparate group of killers arrived at a similar condition of extreme paranoia and instability. In each case, he depicts upbringings devoid of love and nurturing, which disposed these individuals toward violence. He concludes by discussing options for prevention and treatment, acknowledging that "tough on crime" measures receive support over more complex intervention proposals, like Hawaii's Healthy Start program and similar efforts in other areas, which target at-risk families with the goal of "parenting the parents" and have produced surprising decreases in reported abuse and neglect. This is an excellent book for all those concerned with addressing the root causes of violence and one that should be read by those who favor punishment over prevention. (June) Forecast: Pincus is a recognized expert on the mind of a killer who has received prior media attention, including coverage by the New Yorker. For this book, the publisher plans author appearances in D.C. and New York and expects major media interest.

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Review

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BASE INSTINCTS: WHAT MAKES KILLERS KILL? BY JONATHAN H. PINCUS PDF

Neurologist Jonathan Pincus probes into the lives of numerous serial killers and other violent criminals to find out what triggers the violent instinct. Working with forensic psychologist Dorothy Lewis, he investigates their family backgrounds and medical history, discovering that virtually all the murderers themselves suffered severe abuse as children, which permanently damaged their developing brains. In these stories, Dr. Pincus finds that violent criminal behaviour cannot be solely attributed to genetics - rather, it is the catastrophic product of a brain that may be born predisposed to violence coupled with an abusive environment. Focusing on these critical factors, how can we identify potentially violent persons from a young age before the damage becomes irrevocable? How can we rehabilitate violent criminals and at the same time safeguard against their committing future crimes?

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Jonathan H. Pincus is chairman emeritus of Georgetown University's Department of Neurology.

Most helpful customer reviews

29 of 31 people found the following review helpful.

New Insights and Recommendations concerning Violence

By Charles R. Braun

In this newly-published book (2001), an experienced neurologist tackles the difficult question of "what makes killers kill," an issue usually addressed by different specialists like psychiatrists and lawyers. Although this book does not answer this question to the point of making either murder or serial murder predictable, it does provide new evidence, new insights, and and new recommendations, from a novel standpoint, on both the causes and prevention of violence in our society. The book's novel thesis is based on the author's unique experience, which the book in part recounts, examining numerous convicted murderers and serial killers for neurological and other impairments that might be relevant to their sentencing. The book also discusses the making and motivation of mass murderers like Hitler.

Commendably, the book is succinctly and clearly written, and mostly free from medical and other technical jargon. Detailed footnotes are inobtrusively provided, however, in the text, and at the end of the book, for readers wishing to see or pursue the author's technical references and reasoning. Also at the end of the book is an appendix that explains how the author conducted his examinations. The book thus can be readily and quickly understood by the general reader, without medical or neurological training, including persons who have not previously explored the issues which the author addresses. The book is made even more readable by well-written passages which are exceptionally witty, interesting, or exciting.

Readers should be cautioned, however, that some of the book's descriptions of actual crimes, and the abuse that certain criminals apparently suffered as children, are sufficiently detailed and specific to be unsuitable for the faint of heart. Otherwise stated, I highly recommend this book, but not for bedtime reading.

26 of 29 people found the following review helpful.

A Very Fine Effort

By Mark K. Mcdonough

The point of this fairly slim volume is to convince the reader that many (perhaps the vast majority) of our most dangerous criminals have neurologic impairments, and that brain dysfunction, along with child abuse and paranoid thinking, is at the heart of much violent behavior. This is not an entirely new message, but it is one Pincus approaches with a great deal of authority -- he's a professor of Neurology at Georgetown, was formerly at Yale and has studied dozens of death row prisoners along with his colleague Dorothy Ortnow Lewis.

Dr. Pincus clearly decided not to risk alienating readers with scientific terminology or complex explanations of brain physiology. The book follows the familiar "casebook" true crime format used by various ex-FBI profilers, coroners, and cops. Most chapters focus on a particular criminal Pincus had dealings with (many of them in his role as an expert witness) and what that criminal's life story shows about the origins of homicidal violence.

The conversational writing style (and oddly cheery alliterative chapter titles) stand in contrast to the horrific

nature of much of the material. The crime scene details will be familiar to any reasonably hardened reader in the literature. What really stood out for me was the descriptions of childhood abuse endured by many of the perpetrators Pincus has studied. As a former inner-city teacher, I taught kids from pretty screwed up homes, and had some friends from abusive families while growing up. But the stories Pincus recounts (corroborated by siblings and others) remind us that there is almost no downward limit to the depths of human depravity. What's rather odd about all the better works in the study of violence and homicide is the sense that this field is under-funded, under-appreciated and obscure. Pincus and other pioneers in the field have answered some important questions, but their work raises hundreds more. If, say one percent of the money our government has spent trying to prove that marijuana is dangerous were instead spent on studying the roots of violence, perhaps we'd have more answers.

15 of 17 people found the following review helpful.

This should be required reading

By jtm

This is a well written, well researched book that should be required reading for all professionals involved with adults and children who exhibit anti-social behaviour. It will be invaluable to educators, psychologists, attorneys, police officers, psychiatrists and more. Why wouldn't anyone who can do so not want to be aware of new findings that could lead to identifying, intercepting and possibly changing the course of a future serial killing or classroom tragedy? Take the time to read the book. It's worth it.

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BASE INSTINCTS: WHAT MAKES KILLERS KILL? BY JONATHAN H. PINCUS PDF

Spending the downtime by checking out **Base Instincts: What Makes Killers Kill? By Jonathan H. Pincus** can supply such fantastic encounter also you are simply sitting on your chair in the office or in your bed. It will certainly not curse your time. This *Base Instincts: What Makes Killers Kill?* By Jonathan H. Pincus will lead you to have even more priceless time while taking rest. It is quite pleasurable when at the twelve noon, with a mug of coffee or tea as well as a publication *Base Instincts: What Makes Killers Kill?* By Jonathan H. Pincus in your gadget or computer monitor. By appreciating the views around, below you can begin checking out.

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