

## HOW THE “ONE BEHIND” MIND-READING TRICK WORKS

In Chapter Five of *The Madness of Mrs. Whittaker*, Mae Whittaker attends her first spirit circle and is amazed that the medium seems to be able to read the thoughts that were written down by each participant. How did she do it?

It's called the “one behind” trick and it requires one *shill* (an assistant who is in on the trick) in the group. Imagine a group of six people. Each person writes something on a folded piece of paper and puts it in a basket. The medium picks up the first paper and announces what it says *without looking at it*. In fact, she is stating what she already knows is on the *shill's* note, which has been folded in such a way that she can distinguish it from the other folded notes. She purposefully *has not* picked up the *shill's* note; it remains in the basket.

The *shill* acts incredulous that she has “read” his or her mind. She then opens the first paper she pulled out as if to verify that what she read was true. She doesn't show the note to anyone but nods wisely and puts it aside.

Then she pulls out a second note, and proceeds to “read” it without looking at it. What she's divining is actually the content of the *first* note she pulled. In other words, the paper she's supposedly “reading” is one behind the slip of paper she is actually pulling. When she “confirms” each note she's read, she is actually reading the next person's paper. The final note she pulls belongs to the *shill*, but she is in fact commenting on the contents of the previous note she pulled.

Here's another way to visualize it, using colors. Imagine that each participant has a different colored notepaper:

1. Medium pulls Red note, but divulges Purple's contents (the *shill's*), then checks the Red note for “confirmation.”
2. Medium pulls Green note but divulges Red note contents.
3. Medium pulls Blue note but divulges Green note contents.
4. Medium pulls Yellow note but divulges Blue note contents.
5. Medium pulls Orange note but divulges Yellow note contents.
6. Medium pulls Purple note (belonging to *Shill*) but divulges Orange note contents.

In real life, different-colored notepaper would never be used because it would identify each participant and give the trick away. But hopefully you can see how a group of people could be hoodwinked into believing their group leader can read minds!