

# People Who Are Great at Reading Social Cues Are Also Great With the Internet

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*Slate:*

Some people are better at navigating cocktail parties, family gatherings, and office meetings. And, as it turns out, they are better at the Internet, too.

That's the word from Anita Woolley, a professor of organizational behavior and theory at Carnegie Mellon University. She's been studying what it takes for groups to make smart decisions online, and her latest research unearthed a surprising discovery: People who were good at reading emotional cues face-to-face also happened to be pretty good at reading these cues in online discussions.

Even without seeing the other person's face, they were able to read other's mental states online, where misunderstanding can easily occur. And if you include these people in your online groups, your group will be smarter, too.

Scientists refer to this ability as "theory of mind." There's even a test for the thing. It's called the "Reading the Mind in the Eyes" test, and it's hard. You look at close-up photos of dozens of sets of eyes and try to determine whether the person is angry, despondent, jealous, panicked, or in some other state. "People who have this are able to represent what others are thinking or feeling based on subtle cues," says Woolley. "What this enables somebody to do is to really fill in the blanks for somebody."

Read the whole story: [\*Slate\*](#)