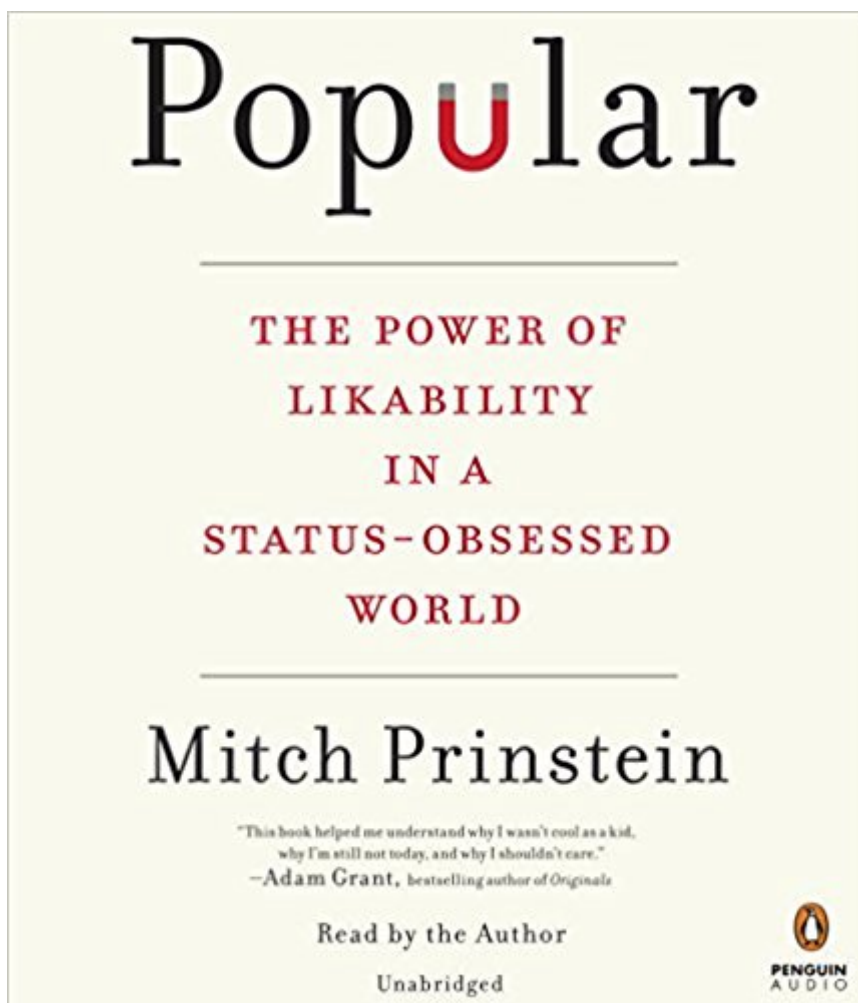


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# Popular: The Power Of Likability In A Status-Obsessed World



## Synopsis

A leading psychologist examines how our popularity affects our success, our relationships, and our happiness—and why we don’t always want to be the most popular. No matter how old you are, there’s a good chance that the word “popular” immediately transports you back to your teenage years. Most of us can easily recall the adolescent social cliques, the high school pecking order, and which of our peers stood out as the most or the least popular teens we knew. Even as adults we all still remember exactly where we stood in the high school social hierarchy, and the powerful emotions associated with our status persist decades later. This may be for good reason. *Popular* examines why popularity plays such a key role in our development and, ultimately, how it still influences our happiness and success today. In many ways—some even beyond our conscious awareness—those old dynamics of our youth continue to play out in every business meeting, every social gathering, in our personal relationships, and even how we raise our children. Our popularity even affects our DNA, our health, and our mortality in fascinating ways we never previously realized. More than childhood intelligence, family background, or prior psychological issues, research indicates that it’s how popular we were in our early years that predicts how successful and how happy we grow up to be. But it’s not always the conventionally popular people who fare the best, for the simple reason that there is more than one type of popularity—and many of us still long for the wrong one. As children, we strive to be likable, which can offer real benefits not only on the playground but throughout our lives. In adolescence, though, a new form of popularity emerges, and we suddenly begin to care about status, power, influence, and notoriety—research indicates that this type of popularity hurts us more than we realize. Realistically, we can’t ignore our natural human social impulses to be included and well-regarded by others, but we can learn how to manage those impulses in beneficial and gratifying ways. *Popular* relies on the latest research in psychology and neuroscience to help us make the wisest choices for ourselves and for our children, so we may all pursue more meaningful, satisfying, and rewarding relationships.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“What makes Popular so fascinating [is] the depth with which Prinstein explains the world in its perma-Mean Girls ways. . . . His book reads as a cheerful overview: an exploration of popularity as both a sociological phenomenon and a physiological one. Prinstein is a lively writer, and he illustrates his arguments with personal anecdotes [and] with evocative turns of phrase. . . . Here, via a professor who has studied popularity and its effects, is a book that is frustrated with all the pretense. Popular, as its title suggests, wants us to talk about its subject forthrightly and, perhaps more to the point, unabashedly. It wants us to question the power that popularity status, in particular exerts on our lives. It offers insights that are bolstered by research; it also, more broadly, gives the concept of popularity a specific language, and an insistent voice.” —Megan Garber, *The Atlantic* “If painful memories of what cafeteria table we ate lunch at can potentially stick with us well into adulthood, what does that say about our culture’s relationship to this thing called popularity?” That’s the question all over the syllabus of Mitch Prinstein’s first book, *Popular*, a study of how we, all the way down to our DNA, want to be viewed positively by our peers but how we go about it through being liked, needed, amusing or feared affects our own health and happiness and that of the society we model from it. —Kevin Smokler, *Salon* “In this fascinating scientific study, Prinstein argues that popularity in the early years is more predictive of adult success and happiness than natural intelligence or family background. The hitch is that there are two kinds of popularity. Those who pursue popularity based on status rather than likeability, argues Prinstein, end up unhappy. Those who are actually likeable—who work well with others, and are kind and generous—enjoy the most success. Prinstein argues that as society becomes increasingly fixated on fame, power and wealth, it is important to understand the dynamics of how they are achieved—and how they aren’t.” —*The National Book Review* “Like

homecoming and curfew, popular is one of those words we tend to associate with high school; and understandably so, since that's the era of our lives when social status can be a daily crushing concern. But even in the thick of those angsty teenage years, you probably sensed that there was much more to the whole popularity thing than just prom court and class geeks. Like all social dynamics, it's complicated. Just how complicated is terrain tackled in a new book on the subject. Popular digs into the data and research around what designates popularity, and why it's so definitional—not just in our early lives, but through adulthood.

—Elizabeth Kiefer, *Refinery 29*

“You might associate being popular at the office with fake smiling, sucking up to bosses, and playing Machiavellian office politics. Those tactics may actually boost one kind of popularity—your status—but will likely hurt the other kind: your likability. . . . There are years' [worth] of research that proves that people who are popular when it comes to social preference are more successful, but you can easily think of examples from your own life and popular culture. I mean, it's amazing how much we give the benefit of the doubt to likable people, and how much we are willing to do for them and how much we just naturally think good things about them,” Prinstein said.

—Business Insider

“Prinstein aims to understand popularity; to reconsider our society's obsession with status; and to show how our desire for social approval can influence our choices. . . . Prinstein concludes by talking about the role of parents in trying to help their children become popular. . . . This highly readable study, which successfully blends science and anecdotes, is strongly recommended for public libraries.”

—Library Journal (starred review)

“An intriguing treatise on how popularity works. . . . Prinstein observes that the course of one's popularity through life is firmly established way back in first grade. However, he notes repeatedly, there are two kinds of popularity: one is an indicator of status and thus highly variable, while the other is likability. . . . an eye-opening look at the ways of the world.”

—Kirkus Reviews

“It turns out that there's more to popularity than status. This book didn't just capture my attention; it also helped me understand why I wasn't cool as a kid, why I'm still not today, and why I shouldn't care.”

—Adam Grant, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Originals* and *Give and Take*

“Fascinating, well-researched, and accessible, *Popular* will make you rethink every social interaction you've had since high school, and help you find greater success and happiness. Read this book, and you'll never think about popularity the same way again.”

—Susan Cain, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Quiet*

“Is popularity overrated? Maybe not—especially if it's the right kind of

popularity that we seek. In Mitch Prinstein's fascinating book, you'll learn all about the benefits and pitfalls of being popular and how to make popularity work for you in business and in life.

• Daniel H. Pink, New York Times bestselling author of *To Sell Is Human* and *Drive*: "Popular will show you how to build strong emotional appeal that enables you to stand out from the crowd and wildly succeed. More than ever, this book's advice is important to parents, future leaders and go-getters everywhere."

• Tim Sanders, New York Times bestselling author of *The Likeability Factor* and *Love Is the Killer App: How To Win Business and Influence Friends*: "Popular deserves to be! A delightful and insightful analysis of the longing that makes us human."

• Daniel Gilbert, New York Times bestselling author of *Stumbling on Happiness*: "Were you popular as a kid? You no doubt have an answer to that, but Mitch Prinstein wants you to have two: Status is one thing, and likability quite another. The origins of both types of popularity are the topic of this singularly fascinating, extraordinarily well-written book. I read it cover to cover and learned as much about the science as I did about myself."

• Angela Duckworth, New York Times bestselling author of *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*: "We have all imprinted emotionally on the vicissitudes of our teenage years. Mitch Prinstein, in this compelling, page-turner, tells us why and also how we can shed the skins of our adolescence. Even better he tells us how our children can achieve meaningful popularity. A science-based Dale Carnegie."

• Martin E. P. Seligman, New York Times bestselling author of *Authentic Happiness* and *Learned Optimism*: "Who does not want to be more popular? When is that quest not in our best interest? Read Mitch Prinstein's fascinating new book *Popular* to discover new views on this vitally important topic. *Popular* offers a brilliant take on a largely misunderstood subject, shedding light on the type of popularity we crave versus the type that will improve our lives. Based on provocative psychological research, *Popular* will change how you think about your adolescence, your current relationships today, and ultimately help you become more truly happy in the future."

• Phil Zimbardo, New York Times bestselling author of *The Lucifer Effect*: "People seek happiness in all aspects of their lives and the quest to be popular is among the most common pursuits. We seek status and gratification from the crowd we run with, the stuff we buy, the street where we live, and the size of our bank account. Mitch Prinstein's *Popular* is a perceptive and inspiring examination of how these aims pale in comparison to the power of genuine, lasting social relationships."

• Sonja

Lyubomirsky, professor, University of California, Riverside and author of *The How of Happiness* – “It is hard to imagine a more important book for the popularity-obsessed times in which we are living. Few scientists understand popularity better than Mitch Prinstein, and no one has ever done a better job of explaining its nature, origins, and significance.”

• Laurence Steinberg, author of *Age of Opportunity* and *You and Your Adolescent*

Mitch Prinstein is the John Van Setters Distinguished Professor of Psychology and the Director of Clinical Psychology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He and his research have been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, National Public Radio, the *Los Angeles Times*, CNN, U.S. News & World Report, *Time* magazine, *New York* magazine, *Newsweek*, Reuters, *Family Circle*, *Real Simple*, and elsewhere.

Excellent! Enlightening and approachable. Great insights to help understand social dynamics and prepare yourself and your children to navigate a social world.

Everyone is interested in popularity. But despite the promise of helping people decode how to improve their likability, no real solutions were offered. I was left with the impression that those of us who were unpopular, for whatever reason as children or adolescents are just screwed as adults. Great....Also not addressed were the many reasons not related to endogenous likability that children can be bullied - physical differences like obesity or delayed puberty or being poor or living in the wrong part of town or different ethnicity. I don't think he offers anything new with his analysis.

This is a truly exceptional book, which would be appropriate for people of all ages. *Popular* provides key insights into how we govern our choices through adolescence and into adulthood. I cannot recommend this book more strongly!

SUCH a great book! Solid scientific basis but simultaneously accessible, relatable, and captivating to read. Regardless of whether you were the most popular, least popular, or anywhere in between, this book speaks to themes that shaped and continue to shape our lives. I couldn't put it down.

Interesting, perspective enlarging.

Be careful. I received an "Advance Uncorrected Proof - Not for Sale" edition, not what I've paid for. I

was very disappointed to receive an unfinished book.

very nice

I thought this book was highly relevant to understanding some of my own drives that otherwise didn't make that much sense to me. ;-)

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