



# The Myth of the Out of Character Crime

*Stanton E. Samenow*

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From time to time, into the news burst accounts of regular people who commit crimes that seem totally out of character according to those who know them well. Lee Malvo, one of the D.C. snipers, was known to his friends and family as a smart, promising man. Steven, was a talented, young scientist with no criminal record. No one suspected he was capable of injuring another-until he was arrested for abducting a man, handcuffing him, and threatening to blow off his head with a pistol. What makes these otherwise stable and respected men and women commit crimes? Why do those who know them best not see the signs? Are there clues people can look out for when a person is about to snap? What in the psychological makeup of defendants resulted in their committing crimes? Here, a seasoned forensic psychologist delves into the psyches of these otherwise normal people, whom he has treated and researched for many years.

With first-hand experience interviewing and treating such offenders, Samenow is able to offer numerous case examples of everyday people committing extraordinary crimes. He reveals the significant clues that help to unmask these criminals and the seemingly mundane aspects of their daily lives. The way a person handles money, consumption of alcohol, sexual history, marital conflicts, job history and performance, interests and hobbies, reading preferences, ambitions and goals, and reactions to frustrations all contribute to the factors leading up to the criminal act. By probing into these and other aspects of the offenders' lives, the author finds a context for the crimes they commit. He concludes that the out of character crime does not exist, that the crime is merely the outer manifestation of what lies beneath the surface. By taking readers through the steps necessary to understand these criminals, the author shows how we can all read the signs before it is too late. He uses real life examples in every chapter to illustrate his points and readers will come away with a better understanding of how these criminals operate.

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