

B2 - How pickpockets trick your mind

My mother taught me from an early age to be suspicious of strange men, especially when they give you presents. This makes it all the more surprising that a nice man bearing flowers managed to swipe 20 euros from her purse, while she was holding it in her hands and looking straight at it.

He said he was collecting for a church charity, so she pulled out a euro. He said that it was too much and offered to look in her purse to find a smaller coin. He must have slid out the 20-euro note at the same time. She didn't notice until an hour later and felt stupid.

In fact, the key requirement for a successful pickpocket is not having nifty fingers, it is having a good knowledge of the loopholes in our brains. The most important of these **loopholes** is the fact that our brains are not set up to multi-task. While **sleight** of hand helps, pickpocketing is as much about capturing somebody's attention with other movements, making them look at things, talking to them, coming very close to them and producing an emotional response as the pickpocket enters the victim's personal space.

Other tactics are more psychological. Pickpockets hang out near beware of pickpockets signs, because the first thing people do when they read it is check they still have their valuables, helpfully giving away where they are. And in my mother's case, the thief's best trick was not looking like a pickpocket. He was a very nice guy, not someone that would cause you to suspect.

Word count: 259

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Additional Vocabulary (pour départager les ex-aequo éventuels):

responsibility – repayment – terrace – inconvenience – Switzerland