

Thom Hartmann

Bestselling Author & Air America Radio Host

How to
Win Hearts,
Change Minds, and
Restore America's Original Vision

CRACKING THE CODE

FOREWORD BY JIM HIGHTOWER

*Author of *Swim Against the Current:
Even a Dead Fish Can Go with the Flow**

CRACKING THE CODE

Also by Thom Hartmann

The Prophet's Way

Attention Deficit Disorder: A Different Perception

Focus Your Energy

Beyond ADD

Best of the DTP Forum (edited with Brad Walrod
and Don Arnoldy)

ADD Success Stories

Think Fast! (edited with Janie Bowman
and Susan Burgess)

Healing ADD

Thom Hartmann's Complete Guide to ADHD

Unequal Protection

ADHD Secrets of Success

The Greatest Spiritual Secret

The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight

The Edison Gene

We the People

What Would Jefferson Do?

Ultimate Sacrifice

Walk Your Troubles Away

*Screwed: The Undeclared War Against the Middle
Class—And What We Can Do About It*

CRACKING THE CODE

HOW TO WIN HEARTS,
CHANGE MINDS, AND RESTORE
AMERICA'S ORIGINAL VISION

THOM HARTMANN



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.
San Francisco
a BK Currents book

Cracking the Code

Copyright © 2007, 2008 by Thom Hartmann and Mythical Research, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, write to the publisher, addressed “Attention: Permissions Coordinator,” at the address below.



Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

235 Montgomery Street, Suite 650

San Francisco, California 94104-2916

Tel: (415) 288-0260, Fax: (415) 362-2512

www.bkconnection.com

BK

Ordering information for print editions

Quantity sales. Special discounts are available on quantity purchases by corporations, associations, and others. For details, contact the “Special Sales Department” at the Berrett-Koehler address above.

Individual sales. Berrett-Koehler publications are available through most bookstores. They can also be ordered directly from Berrett-Koehler: Tel: (800) 929-2929; Fax: (802) 864-7626; www.bkconnection.com

Orders for college textbook/course adoption use. Please contact Berrett-Koehler: Tel: (800) 929-2929; Fax: (802) 864-7626.

Orders by U.S. trade bookstores and wholesalers. Please contact Ingram Publisher Services, Tel: (800) 509-4887; Fax: (800) 838-1149; E-mail: customer.service@ingrampublisherservices.com; or visit www.ingrampublisherservices.com/Ordering for details about electronic ordering.

Berrett-Koehler and the BK logo are registered trademarks of Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

First Edition

Hardcover print edition ISBN 978-1-57675-458-0

Paperback print edition ISBN 978-1-57675-627-0

PDF e-book ISBN 978-1-57675-533-4

2008-1

Interior design and composition by Gary Palmatier, Ideas to Images.

Elizabeth von Radics, copyeditor; Mike Mollett, proofreader; Medea Minnich, indexer.

Cover design: Valerie Brewster, Scribe Typography. Cover photo: Deborah Feingold Photography.

*This book is dedicated to Stan and Cindy Hartmann
and to my mother, Helen Jean Hartmann.*

This page intentionally left blank

A NOTE TO THE READER

This book is written in a new language. Every word means precisely what it says. The tools of communication revealed herein are also used in its writing. You may spot many of these on your first read through, although they will probably be most visible, most clearly heard, and most easily picked out on a subsequent reading.

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

Foreword	<i>by Jim Hightower</i>	xi
<i>Introduction</i>	Talking the Talk	1
Part I	Telling Your Story	11
Chapter 1	Cracking the Worldview Code	13
Chapter 2	Cracking the Story Code	33
Part II	Feeling Comes First	37
Chapter 3	Cracking the Sensory Code	39
Chapter 4	The Body's Secret Language	53
Chapter 5	How Feelings Are Anchored	67
Chapter 6	The "Negative" Code	77
Part III	The Meaning of a Communication Is the Response You Get	87
Chapter 7	The Code of the Core Story	89
Chapter 8	Mastering the Learning Trance	99
Chapter 9	Future Pacing	109
Chapter 10	Framing	121
Part IV	The Map Is Not the Territory	139
Chapter 11	Learning the Legend	141
Chapter 12	The Motivation Code	155
Chapter 13	Chunking the Code	175
Chapter 14	The Identity Code	183
<i>Conclusion</i>	Reclaiming the Liberal Story	195
Notes		203
Index		213
Acknowledgments		221
About the Author		224

This page intentionally left blank

FOREWORD

JIM HIGHTOWER

If Jefferson, Madison, Adams, and the boys—the founding fathers—could see what today’s leaders have done with their historic handiwork, they’d be scratching their white powered wigs in befuddlement.

How, they’d ask, did America go from “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” to torture, repression of dissent, and pursuit of empire? How did “promote the general welfare” get twisted into tax giveaways for the superrich while millions of children are left with no health coverage? How did “We the people” become they the corporations?

Past leaders who tapped into America’s enormous potential for economic fairness, social justice, and opportunity for all have been supplanted by a new breed of cynical manipulators who trade in fear: color-coded fear of foreign madmen; fear of losing your job, home, and health insurance; fear of fear; fear of a Black preacher, for Godssake!

What happened? The fearmongers—striving to impose both a right-wing and a corporate agenda—learned the importance in our culture of telling a story. Underlying their story is a scary worldview teaching that people—that is, “others,” “strangers,” “them”—are evil at heart and should be treated with suspicion. Forget “Love thy neighbor.” Keep your eyes on that SOB! Also central to their story is the pernicious notion that, far from all of us being in this together, each of us is on our own, and everybody must grab as much as they can, as fast as they can.

So these plutocrats, autocrats, theocrats, and kleptocrats spun Horatio Alger tales that glorified barons of commerce and

the rise of dot-com billionaires; their newspapers and television stations extolled the privatization of all things public; laissez-faire ideologues were lionized, while unionists and environmentalists were trivialized; they wallowed piously in stories of “family values,” even as they proselytized against getting involved in “socialistic” concerns for the larger human family; and they painted images of foreign enemies wielding weapons of mass destruction, as well as bamboozling us with fantasies for neer-do-wells here at home who are out to take our property and livelihoods.

The Powers That Be and their Republican enablers are still churning out meticulously-constructed, focus-group-tested messages that perpetuate fear and aim to make us think that what they want is what we want.

So, where are the Democrats? Where is the liberating, uniting, energizing, progressive story of America, the storyline on which our great country was founded, the ongoing democratic message that leads us toward a just and hope-filled future?

Too often, our story is buried in talking points, a deluge of facts, and a plethora of platform planks. A great grassroots visionary and friend of mine, Van Jones, heads the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in Oakland, California. Encouraging liberals to reach out to people with more than statistics and power-point presentations, Van notes that Martin Luther King Jr. did not say: “I have a ... position paper.”

No, Rev. King had *a dream*, and he painted it beautifully, memorably for us in words.

Enter Thom Hartmann—a radio talkshow host, journalist, psychotherapist, and communications expert who has thought a lot and learned a lot about talking to regular folks—that is, the hoi polloi, the rank and file ... you and me.

On his daily Air America radio broadcast, Thom makes a point of inviting “The Enemy” onto his show, both as guests and as callers. He has learned their spin, cracked their code, and he has brought us this book to explain how we can do the same.

Keep in mind, this book is not about pointing fingers. After all, as Thom says, “we’re all just human here,” and everyone votes with the intention of building a society in which their children can grow up safe, healthy, and happy. The problem is that the people at the top—the puppeteers of Corporate America and the Republican party—manipulate the truth to advance their repressive, avaricious, anti-democratic agendas.

Through radio transcripts and historical examples that span back to the 1600s, Thom exposes the inner mechanisms of conservative storytelling and explains exactly how Republicans try to use fear to trump hope. Thom dissects a handful of recent campaigns, including the Republican Party’s casting of John Kerry a “flip-flopper” in the 2004 presidential election, and—more devastatingly—Bush’s manipulation of 9/11 to justify an invasion of Iraq (which, Thom points out, is no longer a war but an occupation).

If We the People are to reclaim the power that corporations and right-wing governments have long usurped, it’s time to take action. Our politicians can’t save us, no matter how persuasive an orator or how experienced a decision-maker sits in the Oval Office. The burden lies on every individual to absorb the lessons of Thom’s book and spread the liberal story far and wide.

Cracking the Code is more than a book about politics, more than a book about communication. It’s a book about all the ways you and I can connect with each other to build a better society based on the values of our nation’s founders. We have the ability and responsibility to take Thom’s belief to heart—that how we communicate dictates how we live, which in turn shapes our world—and *act*. Reading this book is the first crucial step in that direction.

This page intentionally left blank

I N T R O D U C T I O N

TALKING THE TALK

Communication leads to community, that is, to understanding, intimacy, and mutual valuing.

— ROLLO MAY

My wife, Louise, and I live atop 30 feet of water, 100 feet from shore, in a houseboat on a river in Portland, Oregon. One day I stepped out our back door onto the floating deck that serves as our backyard and found myself confronting a very upset Canada goose. He bobbed his head up and down, lifted his wings to make his body look larger and more intimidating, and ran straight at me, hissing and trying to nip at me.

Observing this behavior my comedian friend Swami Beyondananda (Steve Bhaerman), who was visiting us that week, named the bird Goosalini.

I had no idea why this psycho goose was attacking, but there was no mistaking what Goosalini was trying to communicate: *Stay inside that house and don't come out!* I got the message, but I didn't stay inside. Instead, every time I went out to water the plants on my deck, I brought a broom with me to fight off Goosalini.

I found out what was going on a week later, when I learned from my neighbor that a female goose had settled on her back deck, just a few feet from our own, and was sitting on a nest. I realized that Goosalini must have been the proud papa, protecting his territory, and I stopped swatting at him with my broom.

Goosalini has a lot to tell us about communicative strategies. Even though he was just doing what a gander does when he wants a predator to leave—draw attention to himself and away from his

mate, attack first and ask questions later—he was able to communicate the “go away” part of his message to me pretty well. We all communicate all the time, even when we don’t give much thought to what we are saying or how we are saying it.

Because Goosalini was unable to use what we would call rational powers of persuasion, he communicated by going straight for the more primitive parts of my brain—the parts we shared as human and goose, the center of our gut feelings. The first time Goosalini attacked, I backed off because he was successful in communicating an intent to harm me, which caused me to feel fear, that most primal and visceral of human emotions.

The first key to unlocking the communication code is to understand that when we communicate, *feeling comes first*. Emotions will always trump intellect, at least in the short term.

This emotive form of communication, however, ultimately didn’t get Goosalini the response he wanted. On its own the attack wasn’t very persuasive. Instead of shooing me away, Goosalini got me angry.

Effective communicators know how to get the response they want because they understand how to tailor a message to the person who’s listening. They know the second key to unlocking the communication code: *the meaning of a communication is the response you get*.

Because Goosalini couldn’t tell me his story, I had to imagine his story for myself. The first story I came up with was that he was simply a psycho goose, trying to hurt me for no reason I could understand. The second story that I came up with—after talking to my neighbor—was a story of a dad protecting his soon-to-be-hatched goslings. Both stories accurately described what was happening, but the stories led to very different endings. The psycho goose made me angry; the dad goose made me feel protective of Goosalini himself.

In this book I call such stories “maps,” and the world the stories describe as “the territory.” The third key to unlocking the commu-

nication code is: *the map is not the territory*. Each story captures a different piece of reality; no one story captures all of it. *The key to effective communication is to find the best story to use to convey your understanding of the world to the greatest number of people.*

In politics we tell each other stories all the time. If you think about it, politics is really nothing more than a set of stories.

The United States of America began as a story that the Founders and the Framers told about a society that could live in harmony around the principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This country was held together after the Great Depression and through a war by a story told by Franklin D. Roosevelt, which he called the New Deal.

Ronald Reagan told a very different story—one we are still in—that he called the “free market” story. In Reagan’s story our corporate CEOs should run our society instead of our elected representatives because, as Reagan pointed out (and believed), “The best minds are not in government. If any were, business would hire them away.”

Most of the stories we hear in the media today are scary. We are told to be afraid because the world is a bad place and people are untrustworthy. Every goose is a Goosalini—without understanding why.

These scary stories are profitable to our infotainment industry and to the politicians who are typically allied with the barons of the infotainment industry.

There is a different story, however, in which every Goosalini is a proud papa. It is a story of a world that is interconnected and of people who are fundamentally good. This is the traditional American liberal story, which has been told and understood since the first telling of it during the Enlightenment by thinkers like Jean Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, and Thomas Jefferson. It’s the story that reaches directly back to the founding of this country.

My aim with this book is to give you the tools to tell the liberal story—and tell it well. I will show you how the process of

communication is coded—actually hardwired into our brains—and help you crack that code to become a brilliant communicator.

First, though, there are a few concepts it's important to master.

Everybody wants the best outcomes, and their behavior reflects the best tools they have to achieve those outcomes.

Another way of saying this is that people always make what they think are the best choices given the circumstances and the tools they have. *All behavior has, at its root, the goal of a positive outcome.*

As a practical statement, this means that conservatives and liberals are both working toward the best world possible.

In 2007 I broadcast my radio program live from the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington, D.C. Three hours a day for four days, I had one conservative after another on my show, debating the issues of the day with me. As I was the only liberal in a hotel filled with more than 4,000 conservatives, most felt pretty comfortable, and we were often able to meet on a human-to-human level.

One particularly poignant moment came after I'd debated health care with a prominent conservative ideologue, who honestly and strongly believed that if there were absolutely no government interference in the "private marketplace of health care" whatsoever—no Food and Drug Administration (FDA); no pure-drug laws; no regulation of hospitals, doctors, or HMOs; no Medicare or Medicaid—all the "imbalances" in the system would be removed and everybody would end up with access to health care. Our debate was spirited, fast paced, and at times loud. Listeners may have even thought he was occasionally angry with me.

When we were finished and the radio network had gone to the news at the top of the hour and the microphones were turned off, he leaned across the table and said to me, in a soft and friendly voice, as if he didn't want his fellows around to hear: "You know, Thom, you and I want the same things. We both want our children

to live in a world at peace. We both want everybody to be healthy and to be cared for when they're sick. We both want to eliminate hunger and poverty in the world. We both want a clean environment, security in old age, and protections from the unexpected dangers of life."

He took a breath, straightened up a bit, and added: "We just differ on how best to achieve those goals. I think the free market will make it all happen if we restrict government to its core function of armies and police. You think these social goals can be achieved with the help of government. But we're both good people who love our families and just want the best. We differ on the means, not the ends."

He was so right.

Of course, there is the occasional sociopath among us (Dick Cheney comes to mind), but I'd argue that they're the exception that proves the rule. At our core we're all essentially interested in the same outcomes.

And we can begin to persuade others of our point of view only when we respect and understand theirs. This establishes the rapport that makes communication possible.

WELL-FORMED OUTCOMES ARE DESIRABLE.

If we're going to set out to change another person's behavior by changing their mind about something, we want the outcome of that new behavior to be useful to both them, us, and everything and everybody else involved. In its largest sense, this is a form of *ecology check*. In the most direct sense, what this means is that we're trying to achieve what's referred to in psychology as a "well-formed outcome." It works. It's sustainable. It accomplishes a new goal.

WE ADD TOOLS BUT NEVER TAKE AWAY TOOLS.

One of the essentials to ensuring a well-formed outcome is to be continually expanding—rather than contracting—the sphere and