

Drawing CONCLUSIONS

Those aimless doodles could be saying a lot more about you than you think. By Julie Ihle.

Do you doodle houses or flowers? Or maybe you doodle faces, triangles or stars? Chances are you don't pay much attention to your doodles. For most of us, doodling is a harmless diversion when we are chatting on the phone, passing the time in a meeting or just sitting around.

But rather than aimless jottings on scrap paper, doodles may have significant inner meaning, and can reveal much about your character and personality; your state of mind and your secret hopes, fears and dreams.

Graphologist Caro Duncan certainly thinks so. "Doodles are subconscious designs scribbled while the conscious mind is busy somewhere else. They can reflect the general personality, the mood of the moment or hidden information that not even the doodler may be aware of."

Doodle analysis is a branch of graphology or handwriting analysis. Graphology is a discipline that originated in Europe in the 16th century as a way to assess someone's character by analysing key features of their handwriting. Today graphologists are often used by the police in criminal investigations and increasingly by recruitment firms in pre-employment checks.

Graphologists use doodle analysis to check someone's emotional state and understand what motivates them. Sometimes the police call in graphologists who specialise in doodles to analyse graffiti, which is a form of doodling.

The most common doodles are shapes, straight lines, houses, flowers or faces.

HIDDEN MEANINGS

In general, shapes represent an organised, clear-thinking person and flowers or plants represent a warm, humane person. People who doodle houses have a need for security and doodled travel vehicles mean a desire for a holiday.

However this is not necessarily true of everyone. "Doodles are made up of symbols," says Duncan. "What symbolises a specific thing to one person may symbolise something completely different to another. A doodled aeroplane may mean a longing for a trip for one person and a deadly fear of flying to another."

There are many other factors to consider. Graphologists never look at a single doodle to make an assessment, but rather a series of doodles to get a feel for the subject and personality. Size, space, slope, pen pressure, margins and shading are all analysed.

For example, heavy pressure means high energy or aggression, medium pressure indicates a balanced personality and irregular pressure means restlessness or impatience.

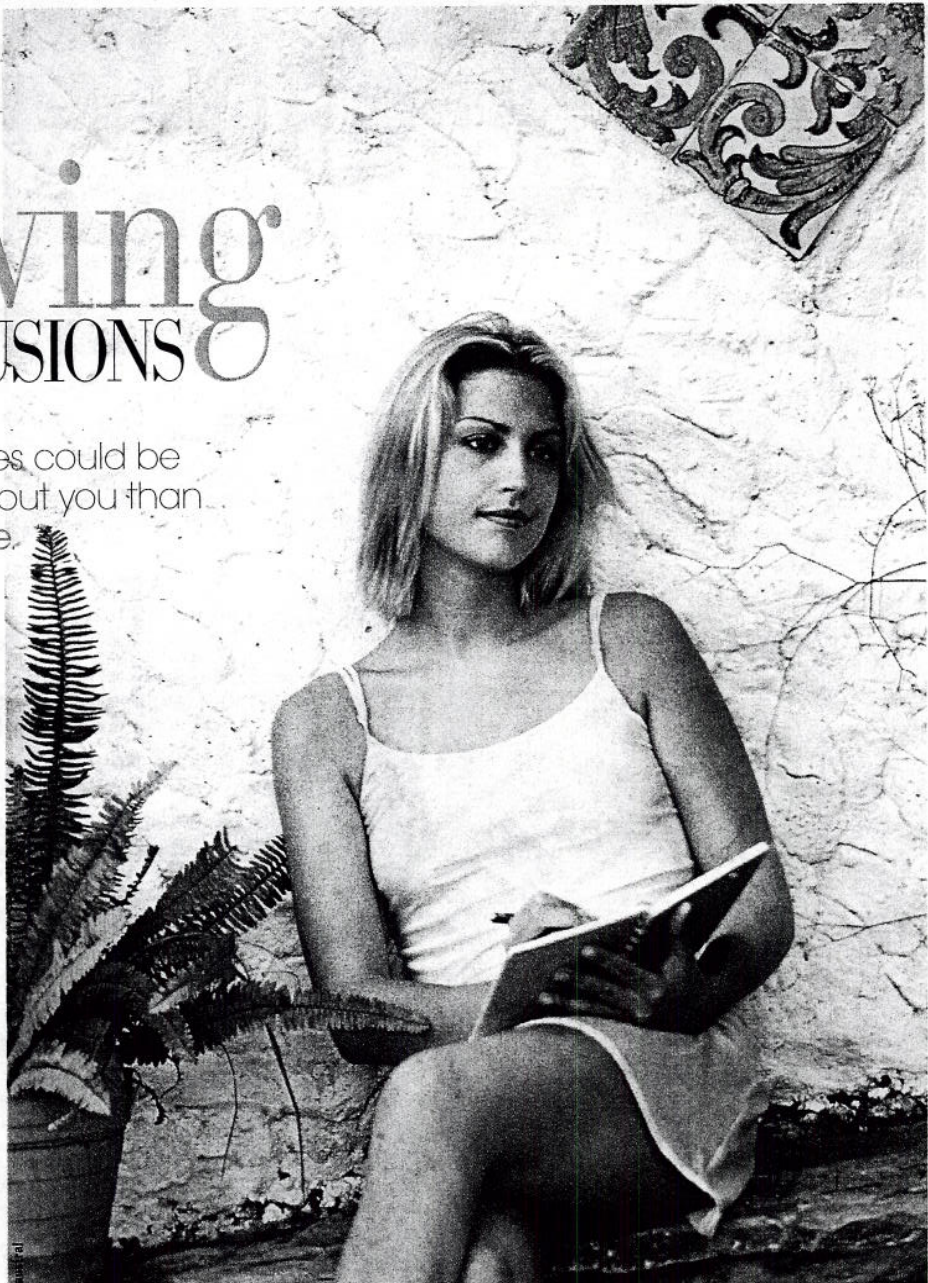
When we are stressed our doodles can temporarily change. Veronica, an operations manager, realised she doodled more when she was under stress. "When my disabled brother was very ill recently, I couldn't help but notice I drew heavy lines which I would go over many times. Normally I tend to doodle flowers, but when stress kicked in my doodles changed."

Kim Wasley, a graphologist and forensic document examiner, says this is common. "A stressed person would produce dark, heavy and angular lines. If they colour in their doodle, they would use dark blues, purples and black."

On the other hand, someone in love will often doodle love hearts, even though they would normally doodle something different.

"Doodles often reveal surprises because they come from the subconscious mind, which manages non-voluntary actions such as digestion and breathing," says Duncan. "The subconscious mind often knows what is going on in the body before the conscious mind is aware of it."

So the next time you are on the phone or in a meeting and find yourself drawing a few aimless squiggles, take another look. They might just hold the key to your subconscious and reveal more than you think.



Do you doodle?

■ Geometric shapes, like triangles, squares and rectangles, signify a clear and organised brain, especially if they are in a pattern formation.

■ Stars, the sun or the moon indicates an ambitious, optimistic person who is good at self-promotion.

■ Abstract shapes indicate tension and stress and problems concentrating.

■ Arrows are a sign of someone with strong ambition

and a need to prove themselves.

■ Houses indicates a strong connection to family and a need for security and nurturing.

■ Flowers or plants show a friendly, sociable and sensitive person; these doodles are often made by social workers. Also indicates someone in touch with their femininity.

■ Faces signify a "people person" and someone who is outgoing and able to feel empathy.

■ Ugly faces are the sign of a judgmental person who doesn't trust others and does not work well in a team.

■ Musical notes show a passion for music.

■ Doodling cross-hatched bars shows a sense of suffocation and a need to escape a stressful situation.

■ Drawing games such as noughts and crosses or chessboards indicates a competitive person who plays to win.