



# Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition

By Stuart A. Vyse

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Although we live in a technologically advanced society, superstition is as widespread as it has ever been. Far from limited to athletes and actors, superstitious beliefs are common among people of all occupations and every educational and income level. Here, Stuart Vyse investigates our proclivity towards these irrational beliefs. Superstitions, he writes, are the natural result of several well-understood psychological processes, including our human sensitivity to coincidence, a penchant for developing rituals to fill time (to battle nerves, impatience, or both), our efforts to cope with uncertainty, the need for control, and more. Vyse examines current behavioral research to demonstrate how complex and paradoxical human behavior can be understood through scientific investigation, while he addresses the personality features associated with superstition and the roles of superstitious beliefs in actions. Although superstition is a normal part of human culture, Vyse argues that we must provide alternative methods of coping with life's uncertainties by teaching decision analysis, promoting science education, and challenging ourselves to critically evaluate the sources of our beliefs.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Wade Boggs is one of the best hitters baseball has ever known; at the plate he's a master technician. He also believes that eating chicken gives him good luck, so he's eaten chicken every day for years. Starting with the superstitions of ballplayers, Stuart Vyse, a psychology professor at Connecticut College, embarks on a fascinating exploration of superstitious thoughts in *Believing In Magic*. Employing scientific techniques and utilizing hard facts, Vyse shows how silly superstition really is. Yet he also admits that some people do perform better when they follow their superstitious rituals. This is a highly informative book, dealing with everything from chain letters to lucky charms to lottery systems.

#### Review

"Believing in Magic is an engaging introduction to psychology focused on a topic, superstition, of inherent interest to us all."--Valerie M. Chase, The Boston Book Review

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#### About the Author

Stuart A. Vyse is Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at Connecticut College.

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**Helen Johnson:**

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