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By Stuart A. Vyse

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Publisher's Synopsis

Lucky numbers. Astrology in the White House. The lure of The X-Files and Stephen King. Although we live in a technologically advanced society, superstition is as widespread as it has ever been. How do otherwise rational people come to put their faith in such ephemera? *Believing in Magic* addresses this provocative question, taking a fascinating look at the psychological underpinnings of superstition. 15 illustrations.

From the Book Cover

Why is superstitious behavior so prevalent? How is this behavior established and maintained? Is there a superstitious personality? How do otherwise rational people come to put their faith in such ephemera? These are the provocative questions that Stuart Vyse addresses in *Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition*. 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), a fear of failure, 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; he explores both the personality traits that make us receptive to superstition, as well as the ways superstitious beliefs can determine our actions. Although superstition is a normal part of our modern 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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