



# The 7 Laws of Magical Thinking: How Irrational Beliefs Keep Us Happy, Healthy, and Sane

By Matthew Hutson

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A provocative and entertaining look at the psychology of superstition and religion, how they make us human—and how we can use them to our advantage

What is so special about touching a piano John Lennon once owned? Why do we yell at our laptops? And why do people like to say, “Everything happens for a reason”? Drawing on cognitive science, anthropology, and neuroscience, Matthew Hutson shows us that magical thinking is not only hardwired into our brains—it’s been a factor in our evolutionary success. Magical thinking helps us believe that we have free will and an underlying purpose as it protects us from the paralyzing awareness of our own mortality. Interweaving entertaining stories, personal reflections, and sharp observations, *The 7 Laws of Magical Thinking* reveals just how this seemingly irrational process informs and improves the lives of even the most hardened skeptics.

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#### Review

"In this wickedly funny and deeply clever book, Matthew Hutson makes a radical claim: All of us, whether we accept it or not, believe in magic. Without these intuitions, he says, we would hardly be human. Through vivid examples and cutting-edge science, Hutson presents a provocative new theory of how we make sense of the world." — **Paul Bloom, Ph.D. author of *Descartes' Baby* and *How Pleasure Works***

This is a book that you pick up, but can't put down. Hutson, intelligently and entertainingly, gives us the best kind of book: one that gives us insight to our very core. Highly recommended!" — **Ori Brafman, co-author of *Sway* and *Click***

"Matthew Hutson promises to convince the most hard-core skeptics and rationalists that they believe in magic, and he succeeds—with wit and clarity and scientific rigor." — **Sharon Begley, author of *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain***

#### From the Back Cover

#### 7 REASONS TO READ *The 7 Laws of Magical Thinking*

1: "Matthew Hutson promises to convince the most hard-core skeptics and rationalists that they believe in magic, and he succeeds—with wit and clarity and scientific rigor."

—SHARON BEGLEY, author of *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain*

2: "A remarkably creative synthesis of the science behind magical thinking threaded through with a very personal narrative that engages the reader."

—BRUCE HOOD, PH.D., author of *SuperSense* and *The Self Illusion*

3: "With wit and respect for both the rational and the irrational, Hutson reveals the pervasiveness of superstition and 'magical thinking,' even among people who consider themselves totally rational."

—ALAN LIGHTMAN, PH.D., author of *Einstein's Dreams*

4: "This is a book that you pick up but can't put down. Hutson, intelligently and entertainingly, gives us the best kind: one that gives us insight to our very core. Highly recommended!"

—ORI BRAFMAN, coauthor of *Sway* and *Click*

5: "In this brilliant, exhilarating book, Matthew Hutson surveys the new science of belief and irrationality to reveal the delights of the human capacity for magical thinking."

—DACHER KELTNER, PH.D., author of *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*

6: "In this wickedly funny and deeply clever book, Matthew Hutson makes a radical claim: all of us, whether we accept it or not, believe in magic."

—PAUL BLOOM, PH.D., author of *Descartes' Baby* and *How Pleasure Works*

7: "This book about thinking is magical. It's the perfect blend of astonishing stories, up-to-date science, awe, beauty, disgust, and humor. It's science journalism at its best."

—JONATHAN HAIDT, PH.D., author of *The Happiness Hypothesis* and *The Righteous Mind*

## About the Author

**Matthew Hutson**, a former editor at *Psychology Today*, has a B.S. in cognitive neuroscience from Brown University and an M.S. in science writing from MIT. He has written for *Wired*, *Discover*, *Scientific American Mind*, *Popular Mechanics*, *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times*, and *The New York Times Magazine*. He lives in New York City.

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