

Full moon phenomenon



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Full Moon Phenomenon A black cat crosses the road and it is bad luck, you aren't supposed to open an umbrella inside of the house or a building, or break a mirror. These are all superstitions that people believe in, it starts as early as age eighteen months when children start to exhibit a form of magical thinking when they begin to create imaginary worlds while playing. One superstition I grew up thinking was true and until recently I still did was that crazy things happen when a full moon is out. Not only did I grow up thinking this, but so did my grandma. She grew up on a farm in Excelsior Springs, Missouri with average, not overly suspicious parents. When I asked her about this theory and where she got it from she said, " I remember my dad keeping more of a close eye of the cattle and horses, keeping them in the front pastures instead of the back ones on the nights of a full moon. I never recall anything happening on those nights, it was just something his dad has told him when he was growing up. " This myth or thought has been instilled in my grandmother's thoughts as well; I know this because she also checks up on the horses on the nights of a full moon. One time in particular I remember being at their house, and hearing her get up in the middle of the night with a flashlight to check on them, when I asked her about it she simply said " it's a full moon honey, gotta check on the girls. " She also came in that night with no report of anything suspicious happening just the quiet night with the horses sound asleep, just as her dad always had. There are tons and tons of things people say supposedly happen because of the full moon. Some people decide to go gambling and believe it will give them luck. People do odd things, turn into werewolves, and the injury rates in hospitals supposedly go up. The belief stretches as far as women going into labor because of the full moon! As I did my research on this topic, I realized that

there were a lot more articles and evidence disproving the full moon phenomena theory than there was saying it was true. This made me even more curious and formed questions in my head. First off, where did these ideas originate? Arnold Lieber popularized the idea of a correlation between the full moon and behavior his first thought was the connection between the moon and the water in our bodies. Lieber's theory was that the lunar effect stems mostly from the fact that the human body is four-fifths water. Because the moon affects the tides of the earth; he thought it was reasonable that the moon would also affect the brain, which is, after all, part of the body. Yet, as astronomer George Abell noted, a mosquito sitting on your arm would exert a more powerful gravitational force on your body than would the Moon. Furthermore, the Moon's tides are influenced not by its phase, or by how much of it is visible on earth—but by its distance from Earth. During a "new moon," the phase at which the moon is invisible to us on earth, it exerts just as much gravitational influence as it does during a full moon. According to Jeanna Bryner, the LiveScience Managing Editor, "The moon is a very powerful force in our universe, its gravity tugging on our oceans to control tides, and its light thought to impact ancient animal behaviors, including the start of one of the largest sex events on Earth (the spawning of corals)." But this has no effect on people at all, and according to livescience.com, "There's no measurable difference in the moon's gravitational effect on the body, because even in a large lakes, tides are extremely minor. On the Great Lakes, for example, tides never exceed 2 inches, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the highest tides occur not just at full moon but also at new moon, when the moon is between Earth and the sun (and we cannot see the moon) and our planet feels the combined

gravitational effect of these two objects. Yet nobody ever claims any funny stuff related to the new moon. " The driving force behind believing in superstitions is because it's an excuse for not knowing the truth or researching the truth, and it basically allows people do or think what they want, guilt free. A majority of people are fearful of the effect of their actions on Earth. Believing in superstitions may change the way their mind foretells what the outcomes may be. Scientists say that people want to believe in superstitions. However, " Psychologically, it gives you a sense of control, which may be false," says Kevin Burke, professor of sports psychology at Georgia Southern University. It seems to be easier to believe the myth than to figure out the truth. Recently, a study published by Northwestern University researchers found " all such superstitions might have a common source: The feeling of a lack of control, which spurs people to concoct false patterns and meaning from the noise of life's chance events. " It is a natural human urge to want to be in total control of the events occurring in one's surroundings. Even as young as the early stages of childhood, people want to feel as though they are the center of the universe. Perhaps, believing in superstitions retains this feeling as kids grow into adulthood. Another reason why people believe in myths is because it puts a cause with an effect. According to a journalist at the New York Times, " The appetite for such beliefs appears to be rooted in the circuitry of the brain, and for good reason. The sense of having special powers buoys people in threatening situations, and helps soothe everyday fears and ward off mental distress. " This goes hand-in-hand with the actions the subconscious has within the brain. Even though one may not think there is a reason they choose to follow a superstition beyond its appearance value, it may be that the subconscious

remembers an event in the past that consciously, one can't remember. The subconscious will use this to the person's benefit to prevent a repeat of a negative occurrence in the past. Are there other explanations? " One man's superstition is another man's religion. In uncertain times a little belief in powers other than human could be reassuring. Superstitious beliefs offer " a little counter-force to such a rational, technical society," says psychology professor Mary Margaret Kelly at Millersville University in Pennsylvania. Some people are hungry to believe in something not so logical. " It is nice to think there is more to life than what science can predict, " adds Kelly, who carries a lucky clay disk as a reminder of a particularly successful day. " It is arguable that this is the same reason that some people are religious extremists. A belief in something more is comforting. A belief that believing in something, like superstitions, will save your soul is divine. What if the superstition fails? Most people assume the human, not the superstitious element, was at fault. A horseshoe is only lucky if it is pointing upward over a door so the good luck cannot drain out. This ironically uses logic to fulfill a belief in something that is arguably illogical. If you have a ritual of using a lucky pencil in an exam and one day you do not do well on an exam with that pencil, maybe you sharpened it too little, or maybe too much. Most believe " it is not the ritual, it is the way I applied it", or worse, " I did not believe enough in the ritual." As I was researching this topic, I came across an interesting fact; the words lunacy, lunatic and loony all have their origins in the word " lunar. " This contributes to people thinking that odd things happen during the full moon. Considering the full moon only comes out twelve times a year, would it only be a mere coincidence if weird things occurred at the exact same time the full moon was present? Eric Chudler, a <https://assignbuster.com/full-moon-phenomenon/>

psychologist at the University of Washington in Seattle, argues otherwise, " One reason is that people have selective memories. " In further elaboration on the matter, Chudler states, " When something unusual happens and there is a full moon, people might notice the moon and assign blame. " Another effect that supplements Chudler's is when " Illusory correlation" also comes into play. Illusory correlation is the perception of an association that does not in fact exist. For example, many people who have joint pain insist that their pain increases during rainy weather, although research disconfirms this idea. " Illusory correlations result in part from our mind's natural inclination to recall events rather than nonevents. When there is a full moon and something decidedly odd happens, we usually notice it, tell others about it and remember it. " This may explain why the myth of the full moon was spread so much. What psychologists term the " fallacy of positive" instances may help to explain the persisting popularity of belief in the lunar effect as well. When an event confirms our hunches, we tend to take special note of it and recall it. In contrast, when an event disconfirms our hunches, we tend to ignore or reinterpret it. So, when there's a full moon and something out of the ordinary, say, a surge of admissions to our local psychiatric hospital, happens, we're likely to remember it and tell others about it. In contrast, when there's a full moon and nothing unusual happens, we typically overlook or discount it. In one study, psychiatric hospital nurses who believed in the lunar effect wrote more notes about several patients' strange behavior during a full moon than did nurses who didn't believe in the lunar effect. The nurses attended more to events that confirmed their hunches, which in turn make the myth and or rumors of the myth seem truer. Another example, near to me, is when my roommate Sarah's mom went into labor on a full

moon. Her mom was told that hospitals will tend to over staff their doctors and nurses on the night of full moons because more women tend to go into labor. They credit this to the full moon although there is no research stating that this is true. Another idea for myths and fallacies being believed easily is a term known as the “ filter bubble”. The concept of the “ filter bubble” is mostly used for thoughts about getting information from the internet, and how it narrows our views of things by limiting our search results. I think this concept has more of a real world effect than that. I think the human brain has its own “ filter bubble”, also known as our opinions. Some people who are very close minded have a filter bubble of their own by not accepting new ideas and believing only what they want to believe. For example, my roommate and I were having a conversation about whether the full moon phenomenon was true or not. I gave her all of the information I had, and tried to convince her of the facts and at the end of our talk she said, “ Well, I still swear it’s true”. This is a prime example of the filter bubble in association with the physical universe. This whole idea/concept creates a problem with society in general. Scott O. Lilienfeld, co-author of “ 50 Great Myths of Popular Psychology: Shattering Widespread Misconceptions About Human Behavior” sums up the idea and gives it historic value. “ In 19th century England, some lawyers used a “ not guilty by reason of the full moon” defense to obtain acquittal for clients for crimes committed during full moons. “ This phenomenon was obviously so big that it influenced people’s opinions on court cases, and it shows the lack of reasoning skills. Lilienfeld’s book leads me to the idea of reasoning in a democratic society. If jurors in the 19th century had issues putting aside the myths and opinions then I am certain it could happen today. This is a growing problem because if we don’t

have the correct or even an opportunity to see all views how are we as citizens able to make a reasonable decision that puts our countries needs first. Society today has a filter bubble of its own. Mass media has become an essential part in the present day society and playing an important role in shaping the world in our minds. Democracy is thriving in most countries of the world and is closely connected with the media. Democracy and media have both become crucial to each other. It is necessary in a participant democratic society for the citizens to be well informed of what's going on. But I don't think we always get the full picture. The news stations and the politicians have arguably limited our views and what we see according to how they feel, and how they want us to feel. They call it " censorship. " According to dictionary. com, " Censorship is the suppression of speech or other public communication which may be considered objectionable, harmful, sensitive, or inconvenient to the general body of people as determined by a government, media outlet, or other controlling body. " Politicians and media producers censor things like pictures of the scenes of bombings, special meetings the congressmen have, or the documents of President Obama's birth certificate. They do this by delaying broadcasting, using gag orders, and being politically correct. However, could this be harmful to our First Amendment right of Free Speech? I know it's a stretch, but it is something to think about. The term fallacy of the positives and participatory democracy also go hand in hand. When a politician or a leader in our country does something immoral or wrong everyone seems to remember it; especially if you weren't one of the people who voted them into office. An example of this, when President Clinton was caught cheating on his wife with Monica Lewinsky. The situation between the two was well

known and gave the public something negative to say about him. Although it scarred his reputation, it can change roles and make a turn for the better. In other words, the same goes for if someone does something really great, then people who supported the person in their campaign seem to remember that instead of the negatives. This is a part of how biased information can be that we receive on the internet, the newspapers, and the news stations. “ Illusory correlation” also comes into play with the democratic society or participatory government, which is the perception of an association that does not in fact exist. For example, after September 11th, every person that seemed to be from Middle Eastern decent was targeted as a terrorist. It was incredibly stereotypical, but because our minds were limited to naturally making illusory correlations, we connected the terrible events of 9/11 to every person who we thought could be responsible. We always remember something big and important rather than the little things. It is an unfortunate human flaw that can be used for the worse. Sometimes I feel like the government uses this idea to their advantage by having their politicians try to lay low until something great happens. As citizens were constantly told that “ the power of the people lies within the people” The politicians telling us that our job in society is so important gives citizens a sense of control. This idea is really important to them, because then they make us believe that we have complete say in what goes on in our country. Yes we do have a say in it, but the politicians and the very wealthy have a big part in it too. By giving us this feeling of control it also contributes to the cause and effect. By giving us the positive thoughts about our input into society, the effect is that we tend to not fight back with things we don’t agree on, send letters, take court cases to the higher courts, picket outside the White House. This is good

and bad in a way. It's good because if some people just go along with it, then the country isn't in total warfare. It's bad in the way that the citizens are just doing as their told so to speak and not finding out the truth to make their own decisions. When you think about the moon and the ideas or thoughts you've had about it before, just take a step back and try to realize the likelihood of them being true. Yes, they are easy to believe but knowing the truth is much better than believing a lie and just going with it. The moon is one of our great wonders, but it doesn't have anything to do with our mental state when it's full.