

Introduction to Psychology

In general, psychology is defined as the scientific study of mental activity and behavior, which are based on brain processes ([page 4](#)).

One characterization of science is that systematically investigates and measures thoughts, feelings, behavior and brain processes. Psychological research uses objective, evidence-based approaches called empiricism ([page 5](#)).



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Stop telling me to do my“
research”. Sane people use the
the internet to research the best
price on underpants and the top
recipe for mushroom risotto.
You can’t research pandemics
and virology on the internet to
the point where you become a
credible authority.

Empiricism

Empiricism assesses a claim through the collection of data to determine if

- your claim is likely to be true,
- unlikely to be true, or
- cannot inform us on the likelihood of being true or false.

There is a claim or belief that customers when provided with calorie information, make healthier food choices.

Caloric information provided	Caloric information not provided
 <p>FIGURE 1.1</p> <p style="font-size: small; text-align: center;">Emmanuel Duenand/AFP via Getty Images Copyright © 2012 M. W. Horton & Co., Inc.</p>	 <p>FIGURE 1.1</p> <p style="font-size: small; text-align: center;">Emmanuel Duenand/AFP via Getty Images Copyright © 2012 M. W. Horton & Co., Inc.</p>
<p>More Likely to make healthier choices</p>	<p>Less likely to make healthier choices</p>

Empiricism is a process that determines if this belief is probably true through data collection—what do people really do? The data suggests this claim isn't true.

Aspects of Science

A major aspect of science is that scientific knowledge depends on empirical data. Scientific knowledge changes when the data becomes more accurate. For some people, this aspect of science makes them uncomfortable.



matt blaze ✓ @mattblaze · 8h

When people say "The reason you can't trust science is that scientists used to say <thing that turned out to be wrong> but now they say <different thing>", they're actually explaining why science works so well.

**Science is not truth.
Science is finding the
truth. When science
changes its opinion,
it didn't lie to you.
*It learned more.***

Kids in highschool: "I just don't understand why I have to take biology and basic science classes, it's not like I'm ever going to use that information in my life."

As adults: "vaccines cause autism and the earth is flat."

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Your Behavior Can be Influenced Without Your Awareness

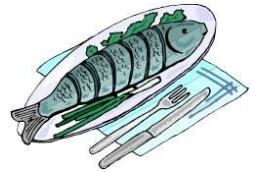
One theme in psychology is that your behavior can be affected without your awareness. Many decisions, judgments, evaluations are made unconsciously and we justify them after the fact.

If you aren't aware of how you are being influenced, you will make the same choices (sometimes bad) and/or take the wrong action to address the problem.



Your Behavior Can be Influenced Without Your Awareness

As an example of how your decisions can be influenced without your awareness, the following comes from an article [3 Obvious and 4 Not So Obvious Ways Buffets Make Money](#) by John-Erik Koslosky, Dec 12, 2013.

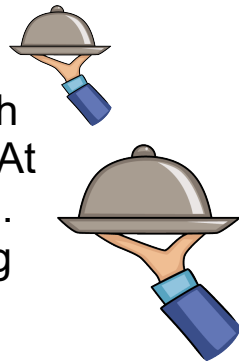


1 - Big cost, little portion

Pricier items on the buffet line – like meat or fish – are cut into smaller pieces. Rationally, a person would just take two pieces instead of one. But in reality, a diner is more likely to follow society's unwritten rule, taking a single smaller piece and moving on down the line.

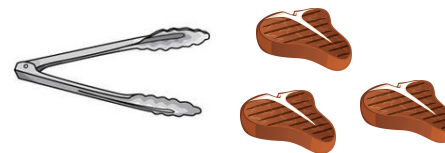
2 - Tricky serving dishes

The size of serving dishes further plays on our conscience. If there's a small chafing dish with a few pieces of baked haddock, we're a lot less likely to take more than one piece. At the big, full trays of potatoes and rice, we're more likely to scoop out a heaping spoonful. And those starchy, filling, lower-cost items are often positioned earlier in the line, leaving you with less room on your plate by the time you reach that meat.



3 - Serving utensil subterfuge

If that weren't enough, smaller serving utensils also help reinforce the behaviors that benefit the restaurant. Spoons in the inexpensive starches are big. Tongs, spatulas, or forks used to move more expensive proteins to your plate may be smaller, and less geared toward moving large quantities of food at a time.



Video #1 of 5: Beliefs that Make You Fail...or Succeed

- There are no quick fixes
- You can spend lots of time with an ineffective strategy and get nowhere

Beliefs that make you stupid

- 1) Learning is fast
- 2) Knowledge is composed of isolated facts
- 3) Being good at a subject is a matter of inborn talent
- 4) I'm really good at multi-tasking

Metacognition: A student's awareness of their level of understanding a topic.

Those with low metacognition are unaware of what they understand and don't understand. Those with high metacognition are aware of what they understand and don't understand.

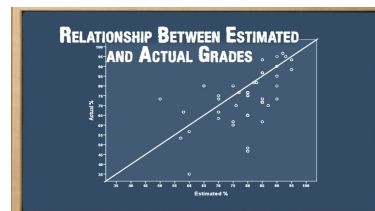


Image source: Beliefs That Make You Stupid, part 1