

BEWARE THE PARANOIDS

They're conspiring to scare you and make you paranoid, too!

Actually, they're not really conspiring, but if you thought for a minute that might be true, then you might be vulnerable to conspiracy theories too.

On the other hand, if your immediate reaction was "No, we're right to be paranoid-- the conspirators are out to get us!", then you are already suffering from the cognitive problem that causes conspiracy theorism.

Now of course you have the right to think irrationally. It's freedom of thought; freedom of religion. You can entertain yourself with whatever fantasies you like, especially if you keep them to yourself, or your beliefs are mostly harmless.

The problem is, some irrational beliefs are NOT harmless, yet their purveyors are free to try to convince others they are true. Ideas like "Covid 19 is a hoax- don't bother to wear masks" or "Climate change is a hoax-- burn all the oil and coal you want.", or "Vaccines cause autism-- don't vaccinate your children."

That's why it's important to understand the cause of conspiracy thinking.

Conspiracy Theorists Have a Fundamental Cognitive Problem, Say Scientists

"But as scientists report in a [2017 paper](#) published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, sometimes people sense danger even when there is no pattern to recognize — and so their brains create their own. This phenomenon, called [illusory pattern perception](#), they write, is what drives people who believe in [conspiracy theories](#), like [climate change deniers](#), 9/11 “truthers”, and “[Pizzagate](#)”believers."

"The researchers suggest that irrational beliefs are born from pattern perception because of the “automatic tendency to make sense of the world by identifying meaningful relationships between stimuli.” But distortions can happen, and the brain can connect dots that are actually nonexistent. People are bad at judging what’s random and believe that, often times, patterns are actually coincidences, which leads to [irrational connections](#) between unrelated stimuli."

"Fortunately, other scientists have found a way to block the pervasiveness of illusory pattern perception: [critical thinking](#)."

-cosmic rat SEPT 22, 2020