



# **Believing: The Neuroscience of Fantasies, Fears, and Convictions**

Michael McGuire

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## Believing: The Neuroscience of Fantasies, Fears, and Convictions

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Believing: The Neuroscience of Fantasies, Fears, and Convictions Michael McGuire A new book about brain chemistry, neural systems, and the formation of beliefs from the scientist who brought to light serotonin's many crucial roles in human behavior.

Beliefs: What are they? How have evolution and culture led to a brain that is seemingly committed to near endless belief creation? And once established, why are most beliefs so difficult to change? *Believing* offers answers to these questions from the perspective of a leading neuroscientist and expert in brain-behavior research.

Combining personal anecdotes and the latest research, Dr. McGuire takes the novel approach of focusing on the central and critical role of brain systems and the ways in which they interact with the environment to create and maintain beliefs. This approach yields some surprising and counterintuitive conclusions:

- The brain is designed for belief creation and acceptance.
- It is biased in favor of its own beliefs and is highly insensitive to disconfirming evidence.
- It prefers beliefs that are pleasurable and rewarding to those that are unfavorable.
- Beliefs are "afterthoughts" of unperceived brain activities; they don't cause behavior.
- Our consciousness has minimal influence on the neural systems that create beliefs.

Based on these observations, McGuire concludes that for the foreseeable future people will continue to hold a multitude of beliefs, many of them intransigent.



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