



Feel-Good Friday

Superstitions can be either helpful or harmful to mental wellness. They can give people a sense of control in uncertain situations or they can lead to debilitating anxiety and illogical decisions. If you do all you can to prepare yourself for something important such as a job interview or an athletic competition, superstitious behavior such as wearing a particular outfit or carrying a small object that is considered lucky may help through a placebo effect. The outfit or object could bring you added comfort and confidence, resulting in a better performance and, therefore, a desired outcome (being offered the job or winning the game). Wearing the same outfit or carrying the same object in the future might continue to lessen anxiety because of a superstitious thought that the outfit or object is partially responsible for the positive outcome. However, if the outfit is not available or the object is lost, anxiety might increase and the superstitious thinking could then be harmful to your performance and the outcome.

The placebo effect of superstitions can only impact an outcome if skill level can impact the results. If a situation is completely dependent on luck (such as when gambling in a casino), superstitions will not provide a helpful placebo effect. Superstitions about sitting in a certain row of slot machines, shaking dice a particular number of times before rolling them, or thinking about a particular song while a roulette wheel is spinning will **not** improve the odds of winning.

Beliefs that luck can be improved through any behavior can be dangerous if they lead to risky behaviors. A superstition about Friday the 13th being a negative day can be a playful topic of conversation that brings people together in shared beliefs and might lead to an entertaining social gathering to view movies portraying the day as undesirable. However, if your concern about Friday the 13th causes you overwhelming distress and leads to your not going to work or to cancelling a medical appointment scheduled for that day, the superstition becomes harmful. If your superstition about Friday the 13th is hurting you, consider contacting a mental health professional to help you overcome your Paraskevidekatriaphobia.

Are Your Superstitions Helpful or Hurtful?

*To receive email updates on current Emotional Wellness Programs, including virtual presentations, send an email saying "Feel Good" to emotional-wellness-no-reply@tricityfamilyservices.org