

Belief in precognition increases sense of control over life

August 7 2013

People given scientific evidence supporting our ability to predict the future feel a greater sense of control over their lives, according to research published August 7 in the open access journal *PLOS ONE* by Katharine Greenaway and colleagues from the University of Queensland, Australia.

One group of [study participants](#) read a paragraph stating that researchers had found evidence supporting the existence of [precognition](#), while another group read a related paper that refuted these findings. Both papers were published in the same issue of a scientific journal. On a subsequent survey, people who read the paper confirming our ability to predict the future agreed more strongly with statements like "I am in control of my own life", "My life is determined by my own actions" and "I am able to live my life how I wish" than the group who read a paper denying the existence of precognition.

In a second experiment, participants who were made to feel a loss of control and then asked to read the same pieces reported feeling an increased sense of control after reading about the existence of precognition, but not when they read that it did not exist. People who were made to feel more in control of their lives before reading and answering questions reported no difference in their subsequent sense of control. Based on these studies, the researchers conclude that psychic [predictability](#) can provide the psychological system with a compensatory boost in perceived control. As Greenaway explains, "Humans are predisposed towards prediction; we like to know what is going to happen

in our lives. Belief in paranormal abilities like precognition can help people meet this need for predictability by making us feel as though we can control our destiny."

The study concludes, "We found that people were drawn to predictability when they experienced loss of control—even to the extent of endorsing seemingly irrational beliefs about precognition."

More information: Greenaway KH, Louis WR, Hornsey MJ (2013) Loss of Control Increases Belief in Precognition and Belief in Precognition Increases Control. *PLOS ONE* 8(8): e71327. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0071327

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