

# Table of Contents

## **50 GREAT MYTHS OF POPULAR PSYCHOLOGY: Shattering Widespread Misconceptions About Human Behavior**

Acknowledgments

Introduction: The Wide World of Psychomythology

### **1. Brain Power: Myths about the Brain and Perception**

1 Most People Use Only 10% of Their Brain Power

2 Some People Are Left-Brained, Others Are Right-Brained

3 Extrasensory Perception Is a Well-Established Scientific Phenomenon

4 Visual Perceptions Are Accompanied by Tiny Emissions from the Eyes

5 Subliminal Messages Can Persuade People to Purchase Products

### **2. From Womb to Tomb: Myths about Development and Aging**

6 Playing Mozart's Music to Infants Boosts Their Intelligence

7 Adolescence Is Inevitably a Time of Psychological Turmoil

8 Most People Experience a Midlife Crisis in Their 40s or Early 50s

9 Old Age Is Typically Associated with increased dissatisfaction and Senility

10 When Dying, People Pass through a Universal Series of Psychological Stages

### **3. A Remembrance of Things Past: Myths about Memory**

11 Human Memory Works like a Tape Recorder or Video Camera, and Accurately Records the Events We've Experienced

12 Hypnosis is Useful for Retrieving Memories of Forgotten Events

13 Individuals Commonly Repress the Memories of Traumatic Experiences

14 Most People with Amnesia Forget All Details of Their Earlier Lives

### **4. Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks: Myths about Intelligence and Learning**

15 Intelligence Tests Are Biased against Certain Groups of People

16 If You're Unsure of Your Answer When Taking a Test, It's Best to Stick with Your Initial Hunch

17 The Defining Feature of Dyslexia Is Reversing Letters

18 Students Learn Best When Teaching Styles Are Matched to Their Learning Styles

### **5. Altered States: Myths about Consciousness**

19 Hypnosis Is a Unique "Trance" State that Differs in Kind from Wakefulness

20 Researchers Have Demonstrated that Dreams Possess Symbolic Meaning

21 Individuals Can Learn Information, like New Languages, while Asleep

22 During "Out-of-Body" Experiences, People's Consciousness Leaves Their Bodies

### **6. I've Got a Feeling: Myths about Emotion and Motivation**

23 The Polygraph ("Lie Detector") Test Is an Accurate Means of Detecting Dishonesty

24 Happiness Is Determined Mostly by Our External Circumstances

25 Ulcers Are Caused Primarily or Entirely by Stress

26 A Positive Attitude Can Stave off Cancer

### **7. The Social Animal: Myths about Interpersonal Behavior**

27 Opposites Attract: We Are Most Romantically Attracted to People Who Differ from Us

28 There's Safety in Numbers: The More People Present at an Emergency, the Greater the Chance that Someone Will Intervene

29 Men and Women Communicate in Completely Different Ways

30 It's Better to Express Anger Openly to Others than to Hold It in

### **8. Know Thyself: Myths about Personality**

31 Raising Children Similarly Leads to Similarities in Their Adult Personalities

32 The Fact that a Trait Is Heritable Means We Can't Change It

33 Low Self-Esteem Is a Major Cause of Psychological Problems

34 Most People Who Were Sexually Abused in Childhood Develop Severe Personality Disturbances in Adulthood

35 People's Responses to Inkblots Tell Us a Great Deal about Their Personalities

36 Our Handwriting Reveals Our Personality Traits

### **9. Sad, Mad, and Bad: Myths about Mental Illness**

37 Psychiatric Labels Cause Harm by Stigmatizing People

38 Only Deeply Depressed People Commit Suicide

39 People with Schizophrenia Have Multiple Personalities

40 Adult Children of Alcoholics Display a Distinct Profile of Symptoms

41 There's Recently Been a Massive Epidemic of Infantile Autism

42 Psychiatric Hospital Admissions and Crimes Increase during Full Moons

### **10. Disorder in the Court: Myths about Psychology and Law**

43 Most Mentally Ill People Are Violent

44 Criminal Profiling Is Helpful in Solving Cases

45 A Large Proportion Of Criminals Successfully Use the Insanity Defense

46 Virtually All People Who Confess to a Crime Are Guilty of It

### **11. Skills and Pills: Myths about Psychological Treatment**

47 Expert Judgment and Intuition Are the Best Means of Making Clinical Decisions

48 Abstinence Is the Only Realistic Treatment Goal for Alcoholics

49 All Effective Psychotherapies Force People to Confront the "Root" Causes of Their Problems in Childhood

50 Electroconvulsive ("Shock" Therapy Is a Physically Dangerous and Brutal Treatment

### **Postscript: Truth is Stranger than Fiction**

Appendix Recommended Websites for Exploring Psychomythology

References

Index