

People with autistic spectrum disorders have difficulty mentalising

Are autistic people 'unable' to believe in God? Ability to think 'inside' other people's heads is key to religious feelings

By [Rob Waugh](#) – UK Daily Mail – May 31, 2012 – ([LINK](#))

- Most believers think of deity as being who 'thinks'
- Autistic adolescents less likely to believe in God
- Ability to 'mentalise' - think inside other people's heads is key to belief
- Men less able to mentalise than women

Belief in God - or other higher powers - might be linked to a person's ability to imagine what others think and feel.

The discovery could mean that people who find it difficult to 'mentalise' - think 'inside' other people's heads, are unable to believe.

'Mentalising' is the capacity to understand what another person is thinking - a crucial aspect in how people handle the social world.

Religious believers usually think of their deities as beings who 'think' in a way similar to human beings.

People with autistic spectrum disorders have difficulty mentalising.

'Autistic adolescents expressed less belief in God,' say the researchers.

The study was based on samples of Canadian studies, and two nationwide samples of the American population.

Men also have far more trouble with the social skill.

Religious believers intuitively think of their deities as personified beings with mental states who anticipate and respond to human needs and actions.

'Therefore, mentalizing deficits would be expected to make religious belief less intuitive,' say the researchers, from the [University of British Columbia](#).

as simple as 'mentalising' being the key to whether someone is a believer or not.

According to [Will Gervais](#), who co-led the investigation, 'Mentalizing deficits are known to be more common in men than women, and in our research this explained the well-known finding that men tend to be less religious than women'. ([LINK](#)) ([LINK](#))

Associated Link: [Outside the Square Psychology](#)

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