

 **Become a fan.**
facebook.com/thenational.ae

 **Lik**

TheNational

TheNational BETA

[News](#)

[Business](#)

[Sport](#)

[Lifestyle](#)

[Arts & Culture](#)

[National C](#)

[News](#) [UAE news](#) [Environment](#)

THE NATIONAL CONVERSATION

Summary

A group of scientists from the United States have revealed that macaques - a type of Old World monkey - can doubt themselves. Just like powerful people.

Share this article:     

Save this article

[YOUR OPINION](#)

POLL RESULTS

Do you plan to visit Al Ain Paradise Park?

- ☐ Maybe
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I have already been

[View results](#) or [Vote](#)

When in doubt

National Editorial

Last Updated: Feb 22, 2011

The Saturday Night Live character Stuart Smalley may be one of television assured humans. Mr Smalley's "Daily Affirmation" comedy skit pokes fun at question being "good enough" or "smart enough"; it's satirical confidence b from a guy in silly sweaters.

American television may make a mockery of self-doubt, but it turns out that Smalley does not suffer from uncertainty on his own.

A group of scientists from the United States have revealed that macaques - Old World monkey - can doubt themselves, too.

Using a computer simulator researchers taught the primates to guess at the a pixelated screen. When the monkeys answered correctly they were rewarded food. Wrong answers brought no food, and a delay in play.

If the monkeys did not know the answer, however, they could choose to "pass" than guess incorrectly. This brought no food but no delay either, meaning it before the next correct answer.

Researchers reason that the monkey's ability to question itself proves that humans, "know when they don't know". This skill, says David Smith of the State University of New York at Buffalo, is "one of the most important facets of human reflective mind".

Self-doubt is not usually so rewarding. But monkeys everywhere should take confidence can indeed be learnt. Al Franken, who played the sweater-wear psychologist on TV, certainly knew this. Today, he's in the US Senate, where monkey's gift of being able to admit ignorance can often be in short supply.

Share this article:     

[Back to](#)



Become a fan.
facebook.com/thenatio



Like



TheNational

Your comments (0 comments)

RELATED INFORMATION

Editorial



Become a
facebook.com/thenati



Like



TheNation

Get the most from

TheNational

Sign up to our newsletter

MOST VIEWED	MOST COMM
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Protests remind the US that is not guaranteed UAE's tradition of dialogue n than ever A work in progress, the FNC to changing times No-fly zone over Libya need: support to work 	

5. Beijing has bought itself a respite from middle class revolt

The National Conversation

[Comment](#)
[Analysis](#)
[Editorial](#)
[Letters](#)
[Industry Insights](#)
[Our journalists](#)

SOUND & VISION

[Pictures](#)
[Videos](#)
[Audio](#)
[Inside the National](#)

THE GUIDE

[Practical Information](#)
[Social Information](#)
[History](#)

EVENTS

[Upcoming Events](#)
[My events](#)

ONLINE FEATURES

[E-Paper](#)
[Competitions](#)

FROM THE PAST

[The Review](#)
[M Magazine](#)
[Weekender](#)

NEWS

UAE news

[Courts](#)
[Education](#)
[Environment](#)
[Health](#)
[Politics](#)
[Technology](#)
[Tourism](#)
[Transport](#)

Worldwide

[Middle East](#)
[South Asia](#)
[Americas](#)
[Europe](#)
[Asia Pacific](#)
[Africa](#)

BUSINESS

[Industry Insights](#)
[Aviation](#)
[Banking](#)
[Economy](#)
[Energy](#)
[Media](#)
[Property](#)
[Technology](#)
[Telecoms](#)
[Travel & tourism](#)

SPORT

[UAE sport](#)
[Football](#)
[Formula One](#)
[Cricket](#)
[Golf](#)
[Horse racing](#)
[Tennis](#)
[Rugby](#)
[Motorsport](#)
[North American sport](#)

LIFESTYLE

[Motoring](#)
[Travel](#)
[House & home](#)
[Personal finance](#)
[Fashion](#)
[Food](#)
[Well being](#)
[Family](#)

Can't find what you're looking for?