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Monkeys Doubt Themselves Just Like Humans, Study Finds

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The Huffington Post Joanna Zelman Posted: 02/22/11 12:08 PM



Apparently humans aren't the only ones filled with self-doubt and uncertainty. A recent study found that certain monkeys question their own thinking as well.

[Professor John David Smith and Michael Beran](#) trained macaques, which are of the [Old World](#) group ([native](#) to Africa, Asia, and Europe), to play a computer game where if they got an answer right, they received a treat. A wrong answer meant no treat, but a brief pause before the next question. But there was a third option -- the question mark.

By selecting the question mark, the screen skipped the present question, considered too hard, and moved on to the next.

The macaques responded in the exact same way as humans -- the monkeys chose to skip the tricky questions. (Unlike Georgia Rep. [Jack Kingston](#) who recently hit the evolution question head on when he stated, "I came from God, not from a monkey.") Meanwhile, Dr. Smith told the [BBC](#), "Monkeys apparently appreciate when they are likely to make an error... They seem to know when they don't know."

Capuchins, [New World](#) monkeys (found in Central and South America), failed to choose the question mark option. Because the macaques are Old World primates, their ability to recognize their own level of thinking may reveal a step in human evolution. Dr. Smith [believes](#) that this level of cognition may have only developed in the line of Old World primates that led to humans. In other words, stop blaming your mother/teacher/boss/first therapist for filling you with self-doubt, and blame the Old World monkeys instead.

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