

## CHARLIE'S LITTLE ANGELS

LETTING GO OF  
'STUPIDITIONS'

After a childhood steeped in mystical folklore, mother-of-two Charlotte Butterfield says leaving her irrational beliefs in the past isn't as easy as it sounds – much to her husband's dismay



Charlotte Butterfield is editor of InsideOut magazine ([www.insideoutmagazine.ae](http://www.insideoutmagazine.ae))

After a surprisingly successful school-shoe shopping excursion, my five-year-old daughter bounded into the kitchen and merrily flung her new purchase on to the table – at which point my inner banshee elbowed her way out of my throat and started yelling “NO! Don't EVER put new shoes on the table, it's bad lu...” I trailed off as I heard my husband's insistent cough and clocked his raised eyebrow. You see, I had just come very close to breaking a promise that I made to him before we had children that I wouldn't pass any of my stupendously stupid superstitions on to our offspring. And, as I have a lot, this is a difficult pledge to keep.

I think you'd be hard-pressed to find a person that doesn't have some predisposition to superstition – I think I may have married the only one – but not walking under ladders, crossing fingers and trying not to break mirrors are common ones. My family, however, took folklore to a whole other level.

Before I met my husband, the voice of sanity and reason, I had never cut my nails on a Friday or a Sunday because I thought everyone knew that if you cut them on a Monday you cut them for health, cut them on a Tuesday you cut them for wealth, Wednesday's a letter, Thursday's something better, Friday is sorrow, Saturday you see your loved one tomorrow and Sunday? Well, let's just say that going anywhere near a pair of scissors on a Sunday is very bad thing indeed.

Similarly, I had never said the word “rabbit” on a Friday, I held my breath every time I passed a cemetery in case the deceased got envious of my ability to inhale and came after me. I never passed people on the stairs without crossing my fingers, always threw a bit of salt over my shoulder if I spilt some and I never missed the opportunity to salute a lone magpie and enquire after the health of its wife. And sadly, this is merely the tip of a rather substantial and – now I'm writing it down in cold hard print – rather insane

iceberg. Having children was the catalyst I needed to let go of all these 'stupiditions' as I now like to call them. I wanted to raise my children in an environment where they felt in control of their destiny, not where it depended on what day they cut their nails, or whether the salt cellar had a faulty lid.

In a similar vein, of course you want to shield them from all your own insecurities and anxieties. Why pass on your morbid fear of spiders, heights or clowns, when deep down you know that it's a teensy bit irrational? We recently made a family trip to visit a friend of mine whose apartment is on the 44th floor and it took a huge amount of willpower not to throw myself in front of my two treasures and hysterically shriek “Get away from the window!” Instead I took their hands, walked right up to the (locked) glass and tried to spot the Burj Al Arab with them. Similarly a friend of mine with a phobia of sharks has now gone so far the other way to hide her true feelings that she has gone, in her words “pro-shark”, talking about how amazing they are at every opportunity. This may well backfire on both of us when my two little ones are one day trying to scale the Eiffel Tower with no harness and hers are breeding great whites, but I guess the flip side of this is that we'll both have raised brave, adventurous kids.

There's definitely a fine line between letting your children experience life free from the anxiety of superstition and, at the same time, making them aware of potential dangers. I mean, walking under a ladder is a pretty foolhardy thing to do, what with the chance of falling scaffolding and all, but I'm pretty certain no wars were started because someone once stepped in the way of a meandering black cat. But as my School-Shoe-On-The-Kitchen-Side-Gate situation recently proved, once a superstitious loon, always a superstitious loon. So, with that in mind, I think I'm doing a good job of keeping it all in check. Touch wood. **A**

*“I wanted to raise my children in an environment where their destiny didn't depend on whether the salt cellar had a faulty lid”*

