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Long Island Medium

Long Island Medium is a television program on [The \(so-called\) Learning Channel](#) featuring Theresa Caputo doing readings as a psychic medium in the tradition of [Sylvia Browne](#), [James Van Praagh](#), [John Edward](#), and thousands of other men and women claiming to get messages from dead people. What are the odds that Caputo is not deluded or a fraud? I'd say they're about the same as those for [Gordon Smith](#) or [Allison DuBois](#) or [Char Margolis](#) or [Noreen Renier](#) or [Sylvia Browne](#) or [Rosemary Althea](#) or [Lynn Ann Maker](#) or [Greta Alexander](#) or [Phil Jordan](#) or [James Van Praagh](#) or [John Edward](#) or [George Anderson](#) or [Dorothy Allison](#).



Theresa Caputo is just one of many unsinkable rubber duckies, as James Randi calls them. No matter how many of these characters skeptics expose, dozens more will pop up to replace or join them. Why? Not because they really get messages from the dead or have special powers, but because people want to believe in them, people are easily deceived, and most people don't understand [subjective validation](#) and [how it works](#). For more on how subjective validation works see ["Gary Schwartz's Subjective Validation of Mediums."](#)

It is understandable that many people want to reconnect with loved ones who have died. Belief in the afterlife and in spirit communication seems natural to many people. People who are skeptical of life after death seem to be in a minority, so there is little reason to distrust such beliefs when there is substantial [communal reinforcement](#) for them.

Another reason these rubber duckies remain unsinkable is that they are playing a win-win game. Skeptics don't have a chance against them. Even when caught in egregious falsehoods--as [Sylvia Browne](#) has been several times--support for their work *increases* rather than suffers. When [Sylvia Browne](#) appeared on the [Montel Williams](#) show and told the parents of a missing 10-year-old boy that their son was dead, she did not lose any followers when four years later [Shawn Hornbeck](#) was found alive. [Browne](#) had also claimed that the man who took [Shawn](#) was a "dark-skinned man, he wasn't black -- more like Hispanic." She said he had long black hair in dreadlocks and was "really tall." She was wrong on all counts. She was also wrong about the vehicle driven by [Michael J. Devlin](#), the man convicted of kidnapping and child molestation in the case. Another alleged psychic, [James Van Praagh](#), said that two people were involved in the abduction and that a person who worked in a railroad car plant was involved and the body might be concealed in a railway car. He was wrong on all counts.

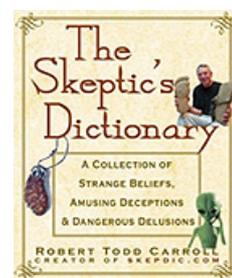
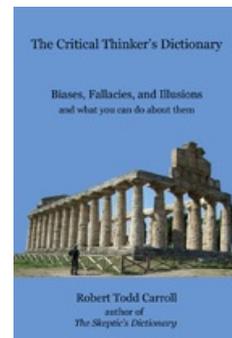


A look at [Van Praagh's message board](#) will reveal why such errors do little to destroy people's faith in characters like [Browne](#) or [Van](#)

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Praagh. To the devoted believer, the psychic can do no wrong. If there was an error, it wasn't the psychic's fault. What may appear to be an error may not really be an error. It's possible the psychic got his or her wires crossed and mistook one spirit for another. And so on. And, as Van Praagh and Browne have often said, they're not gods and not infallible. When you're validated you're right and when you're wrong your fallibility is validated. For the alleged psychic it is always a win-win with your devoted followers.

I'll conclude this entry on *Long Island Medium* with an e-mail from a reader of The Skeptic's Dictionary and my comments on the reader's concerns:

For the love of all that is holy, please do something to show what the Long Island Medium is all about. I saw her on [Dr. Oz](#) (very disappointed in him) recently and of course she is [cold reading](#) but can't you get the goods on her some way and let the public know this is all a show and the bottom line is INCOME!

I saw woman after woman sit in his audience and give her leads all the time saying she was wonderful and they were believers in her powers!

I know intelligent people, successful business women who are buying this tripe. Please write something about her or do a book or article or program about her. I found very little on the website about her and would like to see more of an expose.

Sincerely,

A Non-believer

Oz is an entertainer and he knows what his audiences want. They want what Oprah's audiences wanted: something to believe in, preferably reinforcement of what they already believe in. They don't want somebody to make them uncomfortable by challenging them. It is understandable that they want to reconnect with loved ones who have died and are prone to be uncritical of mediums who can scratch that itch.



Of course Caputo is cold reading, among other things, e.g., her tape recorder stops and then starts again and she uses this as a teaching moment: that's how spirits let us know they're around! There may be no goods to get on her. I mean, she can say whatever comes into her head and the clients can either make sense out of it or not. If they do, she can continue. If they don't, she can shift attention to something else. She can do this longer than you or I could pay attention to the trivial drivel that is likely to be spewing forth.



I don't begrudge Caputo or Oz their incomes. Nor do I begrudge The (so-called) Learning Channel for making a buck off of people's gullibility and desires. As for the intelligent businesswomen who fall all over themselves to make Caputo's day, what can I say?

You can lead a mule to water but if you try to make her think, she might try to kick you in the face.

Exposing one more person claiming to be getting messages from spirits isn't likely to have much effect on those who think they are dealing with reality when watching so-called reality TV.

See also [the backfire effect](#), [channeling](#), [clairaudience](#), [cold reading](#), [electronic voice phenomenon](#), [ghost](#), [hot reading](#), [medium](#), [mentalist](#), [motivated reasoning](#), [Ouija board](#), [psychic](#), [Ramtha](#), [shotgunning](#), [subjective validation](#), [spiritualism](#), [warm reading](#), and my review of Gary Schwartz's *The Afterlife Experiments*.

further reading

[reader comments](#)

[Is Caputo Kaputo Yet?](#) by Mark Edward

[Long Island Medium: A Tall Story](#) by Dr. Karen Stollznow

My commentaries on various alleged psychics and psychic powers:

[Char Margolis](#)

[ABC Television: Put to the Test II - Billed as a test of psychic powers](#)

[Court TV's "Psychic Detectives"](#)

[How F.B.I. profiling resembles psychic cold reading](#) by Robert T. Carroll

["Psychic Detectives on TV: how do they affect paranormal beliefs?"](#)

["Allison Dubois, Gary Schwartz, and 'Medium'"](#)

[Gary Schwartz's Subjective Evaluation of Mediums: Veritas or Wishful Thinking?](#)

["It's All in the Framing"](#)

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[Noreen Renier](#)

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Sylvia Browne

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Lynn Ann Maker

Greta Alexander

Phil Jordan

Phil Jordan

James Van Praagh

James Van Praagh

James Van Praagh

James Van Praagh

James Van Praagh, John Edward, and Sylvia Browne

John Edward

Miss Cleo

George Anderson

Allison DuBois

Dorothy Allison

books and articles

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Roach, Mary. (2005). *Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife*. W.W. Norton.

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Shaffer, Ryan and Agatha Jadwyszczok. "Psychic Defective: Sylvia Browne's History of Failure," *Skeptical Inquirer* 34, no. 2 (March/April 2010): 38-42. The BadPsychics site has closed down. Here's a copy of the message left behind: "In recent months I have been the subject of blackmail attempts, constant abuse, threats and much more. ---- To quote my favourite barman. "I'm getting too old for this shit" ---- Therefore I have decided to close down the site. ----- Hopefully I will be back one day, but if not I would like to say a big thank you to all the fans and followers of BadPsychics, its been one hell of a 6 year run. ----- So from me, your host I would like to say thank you and good bye. ----- BadPsychics lives on through the forum which is now run by my faithful admin team. ----- <http://moh2005.proboards78.com>"

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articles on the WWW

[ABC Has a Medium on Staff](#) by Mark Edward Indiana's News Center at Noon, an ABC affiliate in Fort Wayne, [has a spiritual medium/remote viewer on staff](#). This is a "news" program; not an entertainment program. Is this the beginning of a trend? Mark Edward gave her a call. He was not impressed. Read his post to find out why.



[Michael Shermer on James Van Praagh](#)

[Review of Psychic Medium Van Praagh on CNN's Larry King Live](#) by Joe Nickell

[John Edward: Hustling the Bereaved](#) (2001) by Joe Nickell

[John Edward: Spirit Huckster](#) (2010) by Joe Nickell

[Investigating Spirit Communications](#) by Joe Nickell

[Talking to the Living Loved Ones of the Dearly Departed](#) by Gary P. Posner

["Guide to Cold Reading"](#) by Ray Hyman

[Talking to Heaven? Like Hell! The Spirited Trickery of James Van Praagh](#) by D. Trull

[James Van Praagh: Medium, or Conman?](#)

news stories

The psychic in question here is [Suzane Northrop](#), one of [Gary Schwartz's "validated" ladies](#). (She was one of his psychics in the HBO experiments, part of his [afterlife experiments](#).) If you are one of those people who wants to believe you will not die, Northrop is your friend. I've never seen her perform, but reviews are mixed: true believers seem to get gratification from her [cold reading](#), even if they have to work at it. Critics call her everything from a fraud to a

Northrop is performing at the Embassy Suites, so if you are put to sleep by her conversations with herself you can rent a room and watch Montel and Sylvia Browne on TV before you go to sleep and wait for a dead loved one to contact you in your dreams. I caught part of Montel's new show; it has turned into an infomercial for some sort of veggie-o-mat. He looks pretty healthy. I can't say the same for Sylvia.

[Is Sylvia Browne really a psychic?](#) It must have been a slow news day, but this news story does have some good video of an interview with Browne's first husband.

A Canadian outfit called Palluxo claims James Van Praagh interviewed Michael Jackson shortly after the pop icon's death. According to the unsigned article, Jackson cried during the interview and said there was no foul play in his death. The article ends with the following ominous message: "More answers from dead Michael Jackson will be revealed on upcoming Oprah Show." In another article, Palluxo claims Sylvia Browne talked with the dead Michael.

"I asked him to identify himself by moving my desk. The desk started trembling, then it moved a feet [sic] or two away from me. He wrote his name on my desk," she said. "This was Michael's sign of life."

As believable as these stories are, the source lacks credibility. I hope they're a sick joke and that Van Praagh and Browne will wait until after the funeral before doing their interviews with Jackson.

Palluxo seems to be a cross between the *National Enquirer* and *Weekly World News*. The day after Jackson's death was announced Palluxo claimed he died of AIDS.

[John Edward: Hustling the Bereaved](#)

[Laws targeting mediums spot on](#)

[Mystics see trouble ahead over new EU law](#)

[Van Praagh interviewed on VideoJug](#) (he's from another world and he's here to help)

[Psychic turns Justin Timberlake away](#)

[New Zealand Skeptics - Guide to Scoring a Medium/Psychic](#)

[Shirley Ghostman](#)

[Shooting crap](#) - Alleged psychic John Edward actually gambles on hope and basic laws of statistics. By Shari Waxman Salon.com

[Van Praagh Lives With Dead](#) - miniseries with Ted Danson playing Van Praagh (The show didn't last long.)

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Long Island Medium is a series that follows real-life psychic medium Theresa Caputo as she takes clients on an emotional and spiritual journey with the afterlife. As a psychic medium, Theresa has an ability that most people can't comprehend. She spends her days helping individuals find closure and connects people to their loved ones who have passed in order to validate that they are still with them. For Theresa, this is not just her job, this is her life, as she tries to balance the past with the present on a daily basis. Long Island Medium is an American reality TV series that currently airs on TLC. It premiered in September of 2011. The show stars Theresa Caputo, a medium based in Hicksville, New York, and follows her life as she juggles the problems of everyday things, as well as communicating with spirits. The second season premiered on March 25, 2012. Each episode focuses on Caputo as she conducts private and group readings, with both believers and skeptics. Her husband Larry and two children, Victoria and Larry Long Island Medium Official Site. Watch Full Episodes, Get Behind the Scenes, Meet the Cast, and much more. Stream Long Island Medium FREE with Your TV Subscription!