

The Power and Consequences of our Beliefs: How Mind and Body Interact

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Abstract

It is said that you are what you think. If you are not satisfied with whom or what you are, just think differently; think about yourself as you want yourself to be and you will become that what you think. I have some concerns with this line of thinking. To me it is too simple. Nevertheless, there is a close (if not immediate) interaction between your mind and your body/brain (and your life and environment). The key is however not what you think, rather, what you *believe*. The placebo effect is well known. One study by MD Ted Kaptchuk (2013) compares two fake treatments for pain-release (pills and acupuncture). Some of the 270 subjects, both of those who had been given the pills and the acupuncture treatment reported severe side-effects, while others reported real relief (amazingly, those having received the acupuncture felt even better than those on the anti-pain pill). The question is what are the mechanisms behind these physiological responses? What happens in our mind, bodies, brain and, not to be neglected, in our environment? That there is a tight relationship between the mind and the body/brain is not what perhaps needs to be emphasized today. What needs our focus is “how powerful” are our beliefs, and “what are the consequences” of our beliefs. Just think about the fashion commercials. Because of how models are presented, how many young people believe they are too big and go on extreme diets or worse become anorectic? How many people believe they are worthless just because their peers told them so? These persons may suffer from different physiological conditions (overweight, migraine, anxiety, or even may develop cancer or dementia). Others may live their lives as unemployed, poor, criminals, etc.). Hence, not only your body is a physical manifestation of your mind, your life is too. This paper is aimed at presenting different examples of belief-related attitudes and behaviour from scientific as well as from real-life situations. The focus lies on, as the title reveals, the power and the consequences of our beliefs.

There is this story that people of the Salomon Islands in the Pacific clear trees not by using axes but by screaming at the trees. Indeed, specialized persons will go into the wood and scream at the tree that need come down. They do so every day for about 30 days. Thereafter, the tree falls down and dies.

In the morning, when he [Jesus] returned to the city, he was hungry. ¹⁹And seeing a fig tree by the side of the road, he went to it and found nothing at all on it but leaves. Then he said to it, ‘May no fruit ever come from you again!’ And the fig tree withered at once. ²⁰When the disciples saw it, they were amazed,

saying, 'How did the fig tree wither at once?' ²¹Jesus answered them, 'Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, "Be lifted up and thrown into the sea", it will be done. ²²Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive' (Matthew 21:18-22).