

Homework 3

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Wednesdays 4-5pm

Use an example that is different from a drug (medication or otherwise) placebo effect, reflect on how belief or expectation of your own life may have an impact on your actual body physiology. Write a 1-page essay related to your reflection (350-600 words)

The most influential example of this I could think of is my mental attitude when playing sports. In high school, I used to play competitive badminton, meaning that once or twice every month, I would go out and play badminton tournaments against the province's best athletes. Although I didn't win every single tournament I went to (in fact I won quite rarely), playing badminton has always been more of a mental sport than a physical one for me.

After playing my last tournament in my senior year, I've done a lot of reflection about my badminton journey, starting from the day I went to my first competitive training. I've come to realize that my confidence in the game plays a much larger role than my actual abilities when it comes to winning a game of badminton.

Sure, skill is incredibly important to the game since you need to be capable to match your opponent's strength, but I often find that quite ironically, whenever I focus less and believe in myself, I end up playing better much better and I have a much higher chance of success.

On one hand, I don't think this is a very big surprise. When anybody's less stressed it tends to manifest itself as doing better since generally speaking, stress hinders one's ability to perform. However, the part that baffles me is the fact that I do better when I actively *choose to focus less* on the game. The more fascinating part is, it almost feels as if I'm playing a completely different game as I see and capitalize on opportunities to win points that I don't think I'd ever take otherwise. When games like these happen, I'm often surprised at how well I played after the game - it genuinely feels like I become stronger and more capable player when it happens.

To me, this is very similar to the placebo effects seen with antidepressant drugs. When I believe that I will do better and focus less, I truly feel like (and probably objectively too) I play above my actual skill level. Furthermore, this phenomenon appears to be a completely psychological thing as well - whenever I feel confident in my abilities I tend to do better, just like how antidepressant pills which have no active psychological chemicals also exhibit antidepressing effects.