

The fictitious truth I chose to write about is the placebo effect with medicine and drugs. The placebo effect is the idea that your brain can convince your body that a fake treatment is actually a real one and is working to heal you. Scientists have found that the placebo effect not only convinces your brain that you are healing, but it has actually been proven to be just as effective as some treatments used to heal. According to a survey in 2021, more than half of the adults in the United States alone take a prescribed drug daily. I find this topic interesting and chose to write about it because, out of the large population of Americans that take prescribed drugs daily, how many people actually know what's in those pills? Sure, there are ingredient labels, but that's simply what's put on the label. How do we know what's actually in it? Now, I understand this is a bit of a stretch to say the companies are lying, but since the placebo effect has been proven to be effective, how do we know it's not actively used to effectively treat people without them knowing? I think a prime example of this specifically is the use of antidepressants or anti-anxiety medication. When you take antidepressants, you are convinced you are taking a pill that is helping control your moods and lessen your anxiety or depression. Could the mere thought of this force helping control your emotions be enough for you to feel your mood improving or feel as if the "drug" is doing its job?

I wasn't fully sure what we were supposed to do for the fictitious persona or entity, but if I understand correctly, my entity would be someone trying to educate people on the use of the placebo effect. Another purpose for my persona, although it might sound bizarre, is to help people stop taking medicine that they don't want to. I know many people, including myself, who have thought or expressed their dislike for taking antidepressants or stress relief medicines. For some people, it alters their mood too much, and they don't feel like themselves, or they dislike the feeling or process of having to take drugs every day to feel okay.

Although the placebo effect is mostly thought to be used to convince people that their medicine is working even though it's not medicine, I think it can have another use. If you're convinced or know for a fact that the medicine you have been taking is a placebo, you must realize your brain has been the factor helping you, not the "medicine" you have been taking. With this logic, if there was nothing in the medicine helping you before, and you realize your brain has the power to help you, you should be okay to not take the drugs or depend on them less because they weren't doing anything in the first place. Again, I realize this is a far stretch, considering the fact that not everyone's drugs are placebos, there are different levels of severity in mental illnesses, and many other factors. Although this could be the case, I think it's a thought worth contemplating.

As I mentioned above, although the plan is not foolproof, I think with proper use, the idea can help people reduce the amount of medicine they are taking or get to the point where they don't need to rely on it if they don't want to. Even if there are no real placebo medicines being prescribed in America—because I don't know for a fact that there are—this project could be a benevolent truth by convincing people that there really are placebo medicines out there, and

they can slowly, with support, start leaning off the use of prescribed drugs if they don't want to be taking them.

Another use of this benevolent truth—that there are placebo medicines out there and being used—is informing people that it actually is effective. For those who don't mind being on prescription drugs, this could convince them that, although placebo drugs could be used, it is proven by many trusted studies to be very effective. Who could argue with that if they're seeing progress with the use of their medicine without knowing if it's real or not?

A third use for the benevolent truth that there are placebo drugs, again, is a stretch, but I think it can be used to help combat addiction. One idea to do this is convincing people who are addicts of the existence of the placebo effect. When you take a pill or do a drug, you're convinced this will alter your sobriety and have unique effects. But what if you think, In doubt, is this really going to get me high? Although this, again, is a stretch—because depending on the drug and the person's tolerance, if it really is real, I'm sure they will still feel it but it's a thought.

Another way to help, for example, is for people struggling with alcoholism. As you might know, there are fake beers out there that taste exactly the same as the real thing but don't actually have any alcohol in them. These beers are clearly labeled as 0% alcohol by volume, but what if they weren't? What if that Heineken 0 had a regular Heineken logo on it? When you take that first sip, it still tastes like a cold beer, and you'd be convinced you're consuming alcohol. You may even experience a tipsy state because your mind believes it is, without having actually consumed any alcohol. This can be used to help stop drinking alcohol or to slowly decrease the amount you use by replacing some of your drinks with placebo ones.