

# The Nocebo Effect: How Negative Thoughts Affect Our Health

Source: [Bruce Lipton](#) newsletter

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**Which is more dangerous?**

**Having a Disease OR Having a Prognosis for the Disease**

[TRICK QUESTION – WITH A TRICK ANSWER BELOW]

Voodooism, a religious sect practiced in the Caribbean and southern US, combines Roman Catholic ritual with traditional African religious rites characterized by witchcraft and spirit possession. In societies that hold a belief in voodoo, shamans actually do possess a profound power in helping or punishing individuals within the community.

What is the secret behind the “power” of the voodoo shaman? Sorcery? Magic? As you might have guessed, considering I am the author, the answer is Biology. The secret lies in understanding the mind and epigenetics. Of the mind’s two subdivisions, the creative conscious mind, which envisions our wishes and desires, is an expression of our source, or spirit. In contrast, the subconscious mind is a repository of instincts and acquired behavioral programs we engage as habits. While we generally believe that our creative conscious mind is controlling our lives, neuroscience reveals that the

character of 95% of our life is controlled by the habits programmed in the subconscious mind.

As described in *The Biology of Belief*, through seven years of age, a child's subconscious mind acquires programs, literally beliefs that represent "truths," by simply observing the behavior of their parents, siblings and community. A vast number of children are programmed with the belief that the words of a given "professional" (e.g., a witchdoctor, or just a ... "doctor") are to be recognized as the source of "truth." As a consequence, when we are sick, we go to the "professionals" and turn over control of our health to the doctors to whom we entrust our lives.

The power of a positive belief is recognized by science as an expression of the placebo effect. One third of all participants in drug trials experience the positive healing ascribed to a medication, although they received the equivalent of a sugar pill ... the placebo effect in action. When a pharmaceutical company offers a medication that promises amazing healing powers over your ailment, and in a drug trial you heal yourself in spite of the fact the medication you received was simply a sugar pill, what healed you? The power of positive thinking!

Generally, it is not reported in these drug trials that members of the placebo group also experienced the negative "side effects" attributed to the drug, although again, they had only taken the sugar pill. The empowerment of a negative belief, known as the nocebo effect, can trigger vomiting, dizziness, headaches, and essentially all manner of life-threatening symptoms, including death. In a similar manner, the same nocebo effect empowers a voodoo shaman's curse. Specifically, it is the developmental programming of villagers comprising a voodoo cult that causes them to accept the words of the shaman as "truth," regardless if they are positive or negative pronouncements.

As emphasized, for 95% of our lives, our behavior is controlled by the images held in subconscious mind. These images, whether positive or negative, are translated into complementary chemistry that shape the body and behavior to conform with the belief surrounding that particular image. When the subconscious mind is programmed to accept a chosen "professional" as representing the source of "truth," the mind then empowers that "professional" to implant any image or belief into that individual's mind.

Cardiologist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Dr. Bernard Lown emphasizes that, as with the voodoo shaman, "Words are the most powerful tool a doctor possesses, but words, like a two-edged sword, can maim as well as heal." The duality of the "professional's" words and their ability to both heal and maim was illustrated above in the story of the drug trials, wherein participants receiving the inert sugar pill were both helped by the drug (placebo effect) and hurt by the side effects (nocebo effect).

Fabrizio Benedetti, a professor in the University of Turin Medical School, upended the once held belief that nocebo "truths" could only be relayed through the actual "professional." In an experiment, he led a group of 100 students on a trip high into the Alps, to an altitude of 9800 feet. Days before the trip he privately told one student that the altitude's thin air can cause migraine headaches. By the day of the trip, the student had provoked a "rumor" that made its way through more than a quarter of the group. Those who heard the "rumor" suffered migraine headaches and an assay of their saliva revealed an exaggerated response to the low oxygen conditions with an elevation of enzymes associated with altitude headaches. Dr. Benedetti's results demonstrate that the nocebo effect can cause brain biochemistry changes via a network of "socially infected" individuals.

Benedetti's brain-scan studies also showed that nocebo suggestions initiate a cascade of activation connecting the

hypothalamus, with the pituitary and ending up by engaging the adrenal glands. This flow of information, referred to as the HPA Axis, is recognized as the source of the stress response responsible for up to 90% of doctor office visits. Benedetti concludes, "If your fear and belief were strong enough, the resulting cocktail of hormones could be deadly." Harmful nocebo beliefs that produce illness can be spread very quickly among friends, neighbors, and communities resulting in the production of social nocebo effects in a large population of subjects.

Which is more dangerous? Having a Disease OR Having a Prognosis for the Disease.

The answer depends upon the subconscious mind's developmental program in regard to the belief of who controls your health. The "professional"? Yourself? Please recognize that doctors are in between a rock and a hard place in regard to informing patients of their prognosis. Doctors are legally bound to inform patients of the established ramifications of their illness. However, for at least a third of their patients, it has been established that the words of the "professional" will engage the nocebo effect and unconsciously manifest the prognosis, even one that concludes with death.

YES ... there is an upside to this story: As reviewed in the past, we can rewrite any limiting beliefs that have been downloaded into the subconscious mind, and in their place, write more positive programs to enhance our health and happiness. [Resource Link](#): This empowering conclusion is revealed in the science of epigenetics and consciousness studies. Additionally, quantum physics, the most tested, verified and truthful of all the sciences, emphasizes that consciousness creates our life experiences. Consequently, by reprogramming consciousness, we are empowered to take control of our creation and manifest a life we might characterize as "Heaven-on-Earth."

With Wishes of Love, Light, and Happiness,  
Bruce

For more insight on the power of the Nocebo Effect, visit:

Nocebo Phenomena in Medicine: [Click here](#)

The Contagious Thought That Could Kill You: [Click here](#)