

## WHY IT IS DANGEROUS TO COMBINE THE PLACEBO EFFECT WITH MAGICAL OR SUPERNATURAL IDEAS

The power of a placebo to make a person who is sick feel better is well known. A good and strong attitude is a part of healthcare. It is dangerous to see the placebo as in any way magical or assisted by magic.

Placebos don't necessarily work on animals or the other person. An animal cannot trigger and avail of the placebo effect. You give the pet or person a placebo and you start to see them getting better or improving. It may be just in your head or they are getting better anyway and it has nothing to do with the placebo. Your perception that they are starting to recover makes your own placebo work. When you get a placebo it works for you think of those who seemed to get better after taking something no matter what it is. You think the power of faith even misplaced works and that starts a placebo in you. There is no such thing as a placebo being about you. Its not. Its selfish to just think of yourself for if a placebo is felt to make a person worse that person could end up sicker or give up conventional medicine.

No faith healer or Catholic shrine that promises people they can feel better intends it to be all about supernatural help. They admit they are aware of the placebo effect. Many however try to make out that the benefits of the placebo are coming from the supernatural.

Pain and suffering sometimes are telling you something and in that case a placebo whether it helps you to feel physically or emotionally better are risky and often result in worse harm. The warning is deafened by the placebo.

Healers and shrines always claim they never promise supernatural healing but does that matter as much as promising a placebo or an attempted placebo? And healers often do promise supernatural healing and lie about it. The Christian Church often promises indirectly. For example, Jesus would not help cure a pagan woman's daughter. He said the cures were for the Jews. The woman said her and her daughter were dogs and dogs deserve scraps from the table. Jesus then told her he would cure the girl because of her great faith in saying that. Jesus did not cure her because she trusted him for she had been making it clear long before she spoke that she trusted him. No it was because she expressed a belief that Jesus WOULD HAVE TO give her scraps from the table. It was about the content of her faith not her faith. It was having the faith to demand a miracle. Jesus told her that her daughter would be free there and then. The message is that you should trust God and demand miracles and get them. Anybody reading such a story and going to a Christian healer is urged to have false hope and to blame herself if nothing happens! Its malevolent. If God does not heal then he has a spite at the victim or the victim is not really expecting a cure when he should. Either way the belief has bad implications.

The problem with faith healing and its dangers rests chiefly on the shoulders of those who recommend them or encourage others to go to them. There is more concern for being seen as compassionate than being compassionate.

While somebody is told they feel better or led to think they are cured there is no concern for making sure they are looked after in case they are wrong. A cure does not give you a clean slate - you still have to be sure you are okay. Yet you may be allowed to throw away your pills or medical aids or permitted to or encouraged to by faith healers and their cronies.

Actions speak of what you believe more than your words. It is easy to think you believe you have healing powers when you know fine well you don't. If healers really believe in their abilities then why do they not take more risks with their claims?

They never have the confidence to say to somebody, "Don't go for the operation. I have taken away the cancer." A tiny minority do but only because they have the support of their sect and devotees. They feel supported by the religious dogmatism and can count on people to cover up. They know that many of the followers will refuse to think about the evidence that it is a fraud. You see that all the time. People who claim to have absolute faith in God or a healer do not act as if they do. In fact they act in such a way as to avoid anything that will disprove their faith. Thus they protect the lies they tell themselves - and others.

People who think healers or God has supernaturally healed them are examples of people who:

#Suffered a misdiagnosis.

The problem here is that they feel they have proof that healing works. This could be a dangerous belief - they will have too much future confidence in healers. And the condition they have for real is at risk of being ignored when the person claims to be cured.

#Experienced a spontaneous remission.

It is better to believe that your illness was just going to go away anyway than to believe that a healer took it away. If you

believe that it can go away by itself, that gives you better confidence than thinking a healer may help for healers do not claim to cure everybody. Also, if you think your illness may just go away you can encourage it to by living a more healthy lifestyle. With healers, it is meant to work at least for some people even if they eat junk all day every day.

#Whose prior treatment started to work.

It would mean you think you are healed by some supernatural power and not so much the medication. You need to believe strongly in treatments both to feel better and to avail of them. Attributing your improvement to magic and not the reality is dangerous. Surely when you are taking tablets every day and you believe in them, it is better than an occasional visit to a healer? With faith in the tablets, you are triggering and renewing the placebo effect every day. The best placebos care a lot about what the evidence says and if you know how the tablets help it will only be for the better.

#Were going to get better anyway.

You know that you could have got better anyway so why do you say it was a healing that cured you? You are reasoning that as you don't know what made you better that it was the healing. That makes no sense. Are you saying you are healed magically because you want to feel you are special and to get others to think it too? Are you afraid to say it was not the magic in case you get bad luck? There is no good reason to imagine that somebody cured you when you know you could have been going to recover anyway. You are trying to feel good about knowing things you cannot really know. That is not good in the long run. It is lying to yourself and drawing others in to support and reinforce your lies.

#Whose illness was wholly or largely only in their heads

You need to know that the illness was not real so that you can empower yourself against creating a "new" illness. Thinking it was a miracle healing you deprives you of this opportunity. You will still have the problems that led you to create the illness in the first place.

#Were cured not by the supernatural but by the placebo effect

You need to know that your positive thinking and positive feeling helped make you feel better so that you can empower yourself with them and avail fully of their placebo enhancing powers. Thinking it was a miracle healing you deprives you of this opportunity.

You need to know how powerful the placebo effect can be so that you can stop any disaster happening through your faith in it.

Dangers are:

Religious placebos are not managed by medical professionals who know what they are doing.

Placebos are based on lies and lies can be exposed.

Lead to more lies.

The placebo needs people to deceive you and to sustain the deception and you have no right to pressure anybody to do that.

Being treated as stupid.

The placebo can be given as a result of a misdiagnosis. You could die if you get a placebo for pain when the cancer has been missed. You might have the placebo for a symptom and neglect the underlying disease.

Depending on a good placebo risks making you susceptible to bad ones.

A healer using the placebo effect is a charlatan and a quack.

A placebo can make you feel cured when you are not. This may lead to you refusing or neglecting the medical treatment you need. Those who experience miracles of healing feel that they are cured and it is a sin to take medicine for their ailment. Indeed, to do so would imply they are not cured or that they do not trust God.

Evidence

Now a miracle of healing or any miracle involves somebody being helped in some way. But the problem is the bigger

number of people who need this help are not getting it. For that reason, out of respect, you must be careful to get seriously good evidence for the miracle. The good people being left out of the healing or whatever does not disprove the miracle but it demands strong and good and well-explained evidence.

A person who is helped by a placebo and thinks it is the supernatural or who thinks it is a combination of the supernatural and a placebo is in danger of seeing how placebos can go wrong with people and ending up with a no-cebo. If you are miraculously healed in your opinion and become aware of how so many people are left to suffer in agony that may make you feel your cure will be taken away in the way it arrived. The placebo collapses or your fear starts undoing the placebo. If the placebo needs the supernatural and the supernatural needs the placebo you are not going

Outcomes then are

You are not accidentally risking people feeling left out.

If the miracle is well checked and well verified then you can assume that there must be a reason. You only get the right to call it fair if you verify it well.

Finally

Kathryn Kuhlman claimed to cure a woman who was encouraged to get rid of her back brace during a faith healing demonstration. The woman died two months later. Severe back damage was found as a result of the Kathryn's virtue-signaling demonstration of healing. Harm happens and it is better that the sick get no thrill from healers than that one person suffers or dies as a result of healing activities that have no basis in science and cannot be tested.

Healers should not be encouraging people to think that they cured them. There are other explanations for the cure. Now if it is any one (or more) of those explanations that cures the person the person needs to know. And more importantly others need to know it too. There is nothing praiseworthy in feeding some cranks belief that he cured you.

Many Christian healing stories involve people who have not gone to the doctor or wanted to. They admit the healings cannot be proved to be from God but they boast that they cannot be proved to have not involved God either. They are creating a hypothetical danger that people will not go to the doctor. Now if it is okay to say God cures because you cannot prove he didn't then be consistent and say it does not matter about the doctor!

If you say it is okay for you to believe or think you were healed by God on the basis that you cannot show it was not God then you are encouraging superstition and you cannot be surprised if people drop doctors altogether. Superstition like lies leads to more nonsense.

Even if somebody lets their child die because they trust in God, religion has to say that even if they were wrong they were right to trust in God and the trust was the main thing. Faith and God come first. This doctrine is extremist and even if religion forbids keeping away from doctors it is still to blame if people think God is telling them he will care for the sick without the doctor.

Religion tends to say that God wants you to go to the doctor for healing for that is how God has chosen to heal you. So God is the ultimate doctor. This is a rationalisation and about avoiding the notion that using the doctor implies a lack of faith in God. It implies just that for if God cures, it does not matter if you go to a doctor or not.

Once you say paranormal or miraculous or supernatural healings happen then what when a pill cures you? How do you know it really does it? Maybe a non-physical and undetectable spiritual force uses the pill to heal you? In that case the pill is a sacrament and has no power in itself. In principle, if the gods allowed there would be no need for the pill at all and maybe in an hours time there wont be. Healings in principle attack conventional medical truth. For it to translate into practice for one is one too many and the claims made by healers are abhorrent.

The Catholic church sacramental system surrounding and abetted by the priesthood is a con for it gives treatment for our evil inclinations that does not work. That is worse than any pretended healer. The long term damage is terrible. The fruit is war and lies. They are the malefactors not the evil forces and demons they allegedly disperse with their rites and prayers.

Claimed healings – real or imagined - are marked by the desperate, sick and dying and vulnerable feeling they are healed. Nobody regards your healing as a wonder unless you say it is. People get better unexpectedly all the time. Those who think they are cured feel sure which is why they will not want medical intervention or see they need it right now. They fear doubt or denial of the cure must be avoided or maybe God will reverse the cure. In most cases those who think they are supernaturally healed are no better or worse. Thinking you are healed when you are not is as bad of a situation as actually being worse! Healing miracles encourage the conviction that you are healed and without that conviction there would be no claimed miracle. At Lourdes, people say, "I'm cured!" A person could get healing at Lourdes and reason it's the medication

or the therapeutic effect of being surrounded by nice people when it is a miracle. So the sensation of being cured is dangerous and irresponsible so if you are healed then good but it will not be good for those who hear of you and are inspired by your conviction that God has healed you.