

Our minds are tricky beasts which often distort and confuse perception with reality. For example, it is usual to feel as though we are consciously in control of our own choices. That has been the predominate paradigm for eons. Our senses and thoughts tell us that this is the case. But there are many examples that this is not the case. For example, the burgeoning field of choice blindness goes against this commonly held view.

Choice blindness refers to the ways people are blind to their choices and preferences. For example, let us assume that we want choice A. Choice A is our conscious preference. But then choice A is switched to choice B without the participants being aware of the switch. This might seem unremarkable, but even when a sweet jam is switched with a sour jam, often people fail to recognize the switch. This occurs despite tasting the sweet jam first.

Not only do some participants fail to recognize the switch, but will also go on and give reasons why choice B is a better choice than A. Researchers think it s a way of keeping their sense of self intact by justifying their choice.

There is another interesting phenomenon which relates to conscious awareness. When we are told that what we are taking is a placebo that is, it has no medicinal properties or active agents, but the placebo often still works. Sometimes what seems to be counter-intuitive at first, ends up working at a practical level in the world. Indeed one of the points I am hoping to make is that things often do not work in the way that we expect them to. As such we have to expand our minds to also include the non rational and counter intuitive. Below is a real life example for my book of past experiences that hopefully demonstrates the point.

Years ago I had a goitre removed from my neck. I have a hard time sleeping in a hospital and after a few days and nights of not sleeping, I asked for a sleeping pill of the nurse. She replied she would get a doctor to prescribe one for me. A little later she came in the room with a pill and went on to describe how the pill would affect me. I correctly picked that it was a sugar pill a placebo. The nurse denied this and said it was a sleeping pill and proceeded to give it to me later. Sure enough, I managed to get some sleep in relatively quickly after taking the pill, even though I believed it to be a placebo. When I saw the nurse next she admitted that pill was indeed a sugar pill and we have a good laugh about how effective it worked.

Of course I might have just been that dog tired that I was due to fall asleep anyway, but that s not what the current research is indicating. This phenomenon, like choice blindness is not well understood at the moment. But researchers hope to remedy that in the near future. It will be interesting to see what they come up with and how that will relate to

conscious choice.

Below are some links to relevant research which readers may wish to go to for further study on these topics.

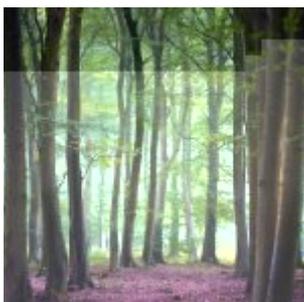
<http://digest.bps.org.uk/2005/11/why-did-i-do-that.html>

<http://digest.bps.org.uk/2010/09/what-do-i-want-dont-ask-me-choice.html>

<http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0015591>



Twelve Common Cognitive Distortions



Putting Violent Feelings, Thoughts and Beliefs on Trial