

Morten Tolboll

Joe Dispenza (The Matrix Dictionary)

On the New Age website Gaia.com Joe Dispenza is presented like this:

Neuroscientist, chiropractor and author Dr. Joe Dispenza empowers people to change from the inside out. Dr. Dispenza combines the fields of quantum physics, neuroscience, brain chemistry, biology and genetics to teach you how to rewire your brain for health and happiness. He has taught thousands how to reprogram their thinking through scientifically proven neurophysiological principles [see my article [Quantum Mysticism and its Web of Lies](#)]

A central idea of Dispenza is the concept of placebo. The website tells:

The placebo has had profound healing effects on many people. But, do we really need the pill if the healing power is within us? Dr. Joe Dispenza delves into the depths of the mind to reveal the connection between belief, perception, energy fields and the mystery of the placebo.

Gaia.com (formerly known as Gaiam TV) web site has a long history of providing a platform for false and spurious pseudo-science, conspiracy theories, and paranormal claims. The company charges \$95.40 per year for unlimited access to videos about remote viewing, contact with angels, alien abduction, crop circles, and the like (see the Matrix Dictionary about it [here](#)).

On Joe Dispenza's [website](#) he is presented like this:

Joseph Dispenza D.C.

Researcher, Chiropractor, Lecturer and Author

*Joe Dispenza, D.C., first caught the public's eye as one of the scientists featured in the award-winning film *What the BLEEP Do We Know!?* Since that movie's release in 2004, his work has expanded, deepened, and spiraled in several key directions—all of which reflect his passion for exploring how people can use the latest findings from the fields of neuroscience and quantum physics to not only heal illness but also to*

enjoy a more fulfilled and happy life. Dr. Joe is driven by the conviction that each one of us has the potential for greatness and unlimited abilities.

As a researcher, Dr. Joe explores the science behind spontaneous remissions and how people heal themselves of chronic conditions and even terminal diseases. He's more recently begun partnering with other scientists to perform extensive research on the effects of meditation during his advanced workshops. He and his team do brain mapping with electroencephalograms (EEGs) and individual energy field testing with a gas discharge visualization (GDV) machine, as well as measure both heart coherence with HeartMath monitors and the energy present in the workshop environment before, during, and after events with a GDVSputnik sensor. Soon, he plans to include epigenetic testing in this research, as well.

As an author, Dr. Joe has written [Evolve Your Brain: The Science of Changing Your Mind](#) (Health Communications, Inc., 2007), followed by [Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself: How to Lose Your Mind and Create a New One](#) (Hay House, 2012), both of which detail the neuroscience of change and epigenetics. His latest book, [You Are the Placebo: Making Your Mind Matter](#) (2014), which is an Amazon Bestseller and hit the NY Times Bestseller List within a week of its release, builds on his previous work.

Dr. Joe received his doctor of chiropractic degree from Life University, graduating with honors. His postgraduate training covered neurology, neuroscience, brain function and chemistry, cellular biology, memory formation, and aging and longevity. When not lecturing and writing, Dr. Joe sees patients at his chiropractic clinic near Olympia, Washington.

So, in combination with his “research” Joe Dispenza is more often than not presented as a neuroscientist, and, as you can see in the description, the whole presentation is manipulating trying to induce this view. The fact is that he doesn't have the qualifications. Neuroscientists conduct research to develop pharmaceuticals to treat neurological disorders. A Ph.D. or M.D. is required for clinical work. Neuroscientists with an M.D. must complete medical residency and pass the United States Medical Licensing Examination to treat patients ([read more](#)).

Joe Dispenza is a New Ager from beginning to end, complete with manipulating titles and pseudoscientific descriptions.

In my article [Constructivism: the Postmodern Intellectualism Behind New Age and the Self-help Industry](#) I describe the New Age movie What the Bleep do We Know? Here we see a combination of documentary-style interviews, computer-animated graphics, and a narrative that describes the spiritual connection between quantum

physics and consciousness. The plot follows the story of a deaf photographer; as she encounters emotional and existential obstacles in her life, she comes to consider the idea that individual and group consciousness can influence the material world. Her experiences are offered by the filmmakers to illustrate the movie's thesis about quantum physics and consciousness.

Some of the ideas discussed in the film are:

- 1) The universe is best seen as constructed from thought (or ideas) rather than from substance.
- 2) "Empty space" is not empty
- 3) Matter is not solid. Electrons pop in and out of existence and it is unknown where they disappear to.
- 4) Beliefs about who one is and what is real is a direct result of oneself and of one's own realities.
- 5) Peptides manufactured in the brain can cause bodily reaction to emotion.

In the narrative segments of the movie, Marlee Matlin portrays Amanda, a deaf photographer who acts as the viewer's avatar as she experiences her life from startlingly new and different perspectives.

In the documentary segments of the film, interviewers discuss the roots and meaning of Amanda's experiences. The comments focus primarily on a single theme: *We create our own reality*. David Albert, a philosopher of physics and professor of Columbia University, who according to a *Popular Science* article is "outraged at the final product" because the filmmakers interviewed him about quantum mechanics unrelated to consciousness or spirituality but then edited the material in such a way that he feels misrepresented his views. The same trick is used in another New Age movie *The Secret* (see my article [The New Thought movement and the law of attraction](#)).

The director, William Arntz, has described *What the Bleep* as a movie for the "metaphysical left".

In the film, during a discussion of the influence of experience on perception, Candace Pert (a neuroscientist, who discovered the cellular bonding site for endorphins in the brain, and in 1977 wrote the book *Molecules of Emotion*) notes a story, which she says she believes is true, of Native Americans being unable to see Columbus's ships

because they were outside their experience. According to an article in *Fortean Times* by David Hambling, the origins of this story likely involved the voyages of Captain James Cook, not Columbus, and an account related by Robert Hughes which said Cook's ships were "...complex and unfamiliar as to defy the native's understanding". Hambling says it is likely that both the Hughes account and the story told by Pert were exaggerations of the records left by Captain Cook and the botanist Joseph Banks. Historians believe the Native Americans likely saw the ships but ignored them as posing no immediate danger.

It is also very likely that Candace Pert has heard about Steve Woolgar's book *Science. The Very Idea*.

The movie has been described as "a kind of New Age answer to *The Passion of the Christ* and other films that adhere to traditional religious teachings." It offers alternative spiritual and scientific views, characteristic of New Age philosophy, including critiques of traditional science, as well as critique of religion's moral values (for my view of the problem of dismissing traditional religions, read my articles [The Value of Having a Religion in a Spiritual Practice](#) and [A Critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork](#)).

Read more about the film on [Wikipedia](#)

Furthermore, Joe Dispenza is a follower of Ramtha's School of Enlightenment (RSE). The school was established in 1988 by [JZ Knight](#), who claims to channel a 35,000-year-old being called Ramtha the Enlightened One. The school's teachings are based on these channeling sessions. The school teaches that human beings have the capacity to utilize their inner wisdom, focus their brains, and create their own reality (see my article [Paranormal Phenomena Seen in Relation with Channeling](#)).

In 2004, three members of the RSE produced *What the Bleep Do We Know!?*.

More about Ramtha's School of Enlightenment:

[Website](#)

[The Skeptic's Dictionary](#)

I have described the New Age thought about programming your brain in my article [Neuro-linguistic Programming \(NLP\) and Large Group Awareness Training \(LGAT\)](#)

I have described the Placebo effect in my book [A Dictionary of Thought Distortions](#), where I wrote:

Classical conditioning is a form of learning or physiological change. It is based on forming an association between a stimulus and a response. The association is remembered and affects future similar experiences. Some physiological responses to stimuli are unconditioned: they happen naturally and involuntary, like blinking, flinching, or the salivation response to the taste or odor of food. Other physiological responses are conditioned: for example, a dog can be conditioned to salivate when a bell is rung because the dog has been taught to associate the bell with food (Pavlov's famous experiment). Dogs injected with morphine begin to salivate and can be conditioned to salivate from any injection, whether with morphine or not.

Relief from pain is often attributed to the placebo effect when no active pain-killer has been administered and the patient reports that the pain has lessened. A more accurate description in some such cases, however, might be that the patient has learned to associate pain reduction with pushing a button that releases morphine or with getting a morphine injection.

Conditioning and associative learning – along with owner or practitioner expectation and self-deception – might explain why some animals appear to get relief from Reiki, Homeopathy, or Acupuncture.

Conditioning can involve much more than obvious factors like getting an injection, taking a pill, or being touched where it hurts. Conditioning can involve the theater of the medical setting and medical rituals, including the medical uniforms worn, medical jargon spoken, and medical gadgetry used. These conditions affect the patient's expectation of relief from the treatment, as does the manner of the healer. Patient expectation, it turns out, plays a significant role in the effectiveness of many kinds of treatment. Therefore related to *Communal reinforcement* and *Subjective validation*.

Classical conditioning is hypothesized to be the primary triggering mechanism for the placebo effect, which must be learned before it can manifest itself. When conditioning is combined with desire and motivation for relief, the placebo effect is boosted for both active and inert substances. Related to *Wishful thinking*.

So, the next time you are wondering how healers can cure people with a simple touch or by waving their hands in the air over a body part or by uttering some ineffable incantation, think that maybe, just maybe, some sort of conditioned response is going on. You don't have to call it a placebo effect. There may be other explanations for some placebo responses and the issue may be more complicated than you think. Your first inclination might be to think magic or miracle (especially when you have heard other people say the same), but first inclinations may be responses to the *Availability bias*. If it is truth you're after, you might want to consider alternative explanations to

what your intuition tells you. Here related to *Ignoring alternative explanations*. It is also important to be aware of *Proof by ignorance*.

All in all: it is important to be aware that the placebo effect doesn't relate to any facts about a "healing energy", or a "proof" of the "power of thought" as for example NLP psychotherapists, New Thought thinkers, and hypnotherapists often claim. The placebo effect is very limited, most often it only has a short lasting effect, whereafter your problems return.

The placebo effect should therefore never be seen as a valid "cure" for anything. This is in extreme degree what Joe Dispenza does. Furthermore, the placebo effect often involves, as for example in NLP, New Thought and hypnotherapy, intentional manipulation of behavior and the inducing of certain worldviews, that are very problematic. When used in combination with meditation, as Joe Dispenza does, meditation, no matter what kind, comes to work as hypnosis (see my article [Neuro-linguistic Programming \(NLP\) and Large Group Awareness Training \(LGAT\)](#), [The New Thought movement and the law of attraction](#), and [Hypnosis, hypnotherapy, and the art of self-deception](#)).

One of the more important responses placed under the rubric of the placebo effect is the reduction of stress. This is often discussed separately as the relaxation response. A caring therapist who exudes confidence and caring in a comfortable and professional-looking clinical setting can be very therapeutic by relaxing the patient. The resulting reduction of stress is physically therapeutic by reducing stress hormones and perhaps stimulating the production of hormones that enhance one's mood. The tapping, the waving of hands, the movement of a light source, the hypnotic repeating of "positive" confirmations, prayer, or whatever gimmick the therapist might use is actually superfluous.

But this doesn't mean that I think *all* spiritual healing phenomena are due to Classical conditioning and placebo effects. Precisely the term relaxation is important, and therefore the practice of, for example, meditation; that is: spiritual practice (see my article [Paranormal phenomena seen in connection with spiritual practice](#)).

I also believe that a spiritual healing phenomenon can come from an outer source; that is: when all the above-mentioned thought distortions have been ruled out. I have examined this in my articles [The philosophy of Karen Blixen](#), [The value of having a religion in a spiritual practice](#), and [What is karma?](#)

But certain healing methods can also be extremely powerful in a demonical sense. In my article [A critique of Stanislav Grof and Holotropic Breathwork](#) I mention the problem of spiritual crises provoked by such therapeutic methods. Also see my

articles [The Ego-inflation in the New Age and Self-help Environment](#) and [The Emotional Painbody and why Psychotherapy can't Heal It](#).

The demonical use of energy is also explained in my article on the philosophy of Karen Blixen. Furthermore it is examined in my article [A critique of the Indian Oneness movement and its use of Western success coaching](#).

Related articles:

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[The Pseudoscience of New Age and Reductionism](#)

[The Pseudoscience of Reductionism and the Problem of Mind](#)

[Quantum Mysticism and its Web of Lies](#)

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