



Mind Over Mind: The Surprising Power of Expectations

Chris Berdik

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“Our brains can’t help but look forward. We spend very little of our mental lives completely in the here and now. Indeed, the power of expectations is so pervasive that we may notice only when somebody pulls back the curtain to reveal a few of the cogs and levers responsible for the big show.”

We all know expectations matter—in school, in sports, in the stock market. From a healing placebo to a run on the bank, hints of their self-fulfilling potential have been observed for years. But now researchers in fields ranging from medicine to education to criminal justice are moving beyond observation to investigate exactly how expectations work—and when they don’t.

In *Mind Over Mind*, journalist Chris Berdik offers a captivating look at the frontiers of expectations research, revealing how our brains work in the future tense and how our assumptions—about the next few milliseconds or the next few years—bend reality. We learn how placebo calories can fill us up, why wine judges can’t agree, how fake surgery can sometimes work better than real surgery, and how imaginary power can be corrupting. We meet scientists who have found that wearing taller and more attractive avatars in a virtual world boosts confidence in real life, gambling addicts whose brains make losing feel like winning, and coaches who put blurry glasses on athletes to lift them out of slumps.

Along the way, Berdik probes the paradox of expectations. Their influence seems based on illusion, even trickery, but they can create their own reality, for good or for ill.

Expectations can heal our bodies and make us stronger, smarter, and more successful, or they can leave us in agony, crush our spirit, and undermine our free will. If we can unlock their secrets, we may be able to harness their power and sidestep their pitfalls.

Drawing on psychology, neuroscience, history, and fascinating true stories of expectations in action, *Mind Over Mind* offers a spirited journey into one of the most exciting areas of brain research today.

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