

Effects of intentionally enhanced tea on mood

Results:

Objective: This study explored whether drinking tea “treated” with good intentions would enhance mood more than drinking ordinary tea, under double-blind, randomized conditions.

Design: Each evening for 7 days in a row volunteers recorded their mood using the Profile of Mood States questionnaire. On days 3, 4 and 5 of the test each participant drank 600 cc of oolong tea in the morning and again in the afternoon. One randomly assigned group blindly received tea that had been intentionally treated by three Buddhist monks; the other group blindly received untreated tea from the same source. On the last day of the test each person indicated what type of tea they believed they had been drinking.

Participants: Stratified random sampling was used to assign 189 adults into two groups matched by age, gender, the psychological trait of neuroticism, and the amount of tea consumed on average per day. All participants were Taiwanese and lived in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, and the test was conducted over the course of one week to reduce mood fluctuations due to changes in local weather and other common influences.

Results: Those who drank treated tea showed a greater increase in mood than those who drank untreated tea (Cohen's $d = 0.65$, $p = 0.02$, two-tailed). Change in mood in those who believed that they were drinking treated tea was much better than those who did not believe (Cohen's $d = 1.45$, $p = 0.00002$, two-tailed).

Conclusion: Tea treated with good intentions improved mood more than ordinary tea derived from the same source. Belief that one was drinking treated tea produced a large improvement in mood, but only if one was actually drinking the treated tea, indicating that belief and intentional enhancement interact. This also suggests that the aesthetic and intentional qualities associated with the traditional tea ceremony may have subtle influences that extend beyond the ritual itself.

Published works:

Shiah, Y. -J*. & Radin, D. (2013). Metaphysics of the tea ceremony: A randomized trial investigating the roles of intention and belief on mood while drinking tea. *EXPLORE: The Journal of Science & Healing*, 9(6), 355-360. doi: 10.1016/j.explore.2013.08.005

Areas of interest:

Mind, Spirit and Health

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