

## DEBUNKING MYTHS IN PSYCHOLOGY

### 1. Uwagi ogólne

Zestaw materiałów opatrzony wspólnym tytułem *Debunking myths in psychology* jest adresowany do studentów uzupełniających studiów magisterskich studiujących kierunki humanistyczne. Przedstawione ćwiczenia mogą być wykorzystane do pracy z grupami studentów psychologii ze względu na swą tematykę, można jednak użyć ich podczas zajęć z innymi grupami, w tym z kierunkami ścisłymi, jako ciekawostkę, ponieważ prezentowane mity w psychologii są dość powszechnie znane i zakorzenione w świadomości społecznej (wtedy może z pominięciem ostatniego zadania, w którym należy znaleźć artykuł na temat wpływu pozytywnego myślenia na wyleczalność raka). Nie jest konieczna specjalistyczna wiedza, gdyż studenci psychologii również często myślą, że mity te mają odzwierciedlenie w rzeczywistości.

### 2. Poziom zaawansowania: B2+ oraz C1, C1+

### 3. Czas trwania opisanych ćwiczeń

Ćwiczenia zaprezentowane w tym artykule są przeznaczone na jedną jednostkę lekcyjną (90 minut). Czas trwania został ustalony na podstawie doświadczenia wynikającego z pracy nad poniższymi ćwiczeniami w grupach na poziomie B2+ i C1. W przypadku słabszego B2+ materiału może starczyć na 120 minut.

### 4. Cele dydaktyczne

W swoim założeniu artykuł ma rozwijać podstawowe umiejętności językowe, takie jak: mówienie, słuchanie oraz pisanie.

## 5. Uwagi i sugestie

W zestawie przewidziane są ćwiczenia na interakcję student–nauczyciel, student–student oraz na pracę indywidualną. Ćwiczenia w zależności od poziomu grupy, stopnia zaangażowania studentów w zajęcia i kierunku mogą być odpowiednio zmodyfikowane. Zadania tu zamieszczone możemy omawiać na zajęciach lub część przedstawionych ćwiczeń zadać jako pracę domową, jeżeli nie chcemy poświęcać na nie zbyt dużo czasu na zajęciach. Wybór należy do nauczyciela. Z grupami na poziomie B2+ zachęcam do wspólnej pracy nad częścią przygotowanego materiału, ponieważ część słuchowa może im sprawiać problemy; mogą zatem porównywać swoje odpowiedzi. Może zająć konieczność kilkukrotnego przesłuchania fragmentów poszczególnych TED talks i krótkiego wywiadu z pisarką. Należy zachęcić słabszych studentów do ponownego obejrzenia materiałów w domu (nawet kilkukrotnego, jeśli jest taka potrzeba). Materiały obejmują quiz na temat mitów w psychologii, TED talk, która owe mity po kolei obala, a także fragment TED talk Lissy Rankin na temat wpływu nastawienia na wyleczalność różnych chorób (tzn. efektu placebo) oraz fragment wywiadu z Barbarą Ehrenreich na temat braku związku między zachorowaniem na raka i przebiegiem choroby a nastawieniem pacjenta. Ostatnie zadanie należy przeznaczyć na pracę domową ze względu na to, że studenci muszą znaleźć artykuł naukowy, który mógłby stanowić dowód na ich własną opinię w kwestii wpływu pozytywnego myślenia na raka. Rozpoczynamy od dyskusji w parach na temat pierwszych trzech mitów, a następnie poszczególnych mitów z quizu. Później studenci słuchają pierwszej części TED talk i zapisują poprawne odpowiedzi. W dalszej kolejności słuchają TED talk na temat efektu placebo i odpowiadają na pytania na zrozumienie, a potem wywiadu z pisarką (taka sama procedura). W ostatnim zadaniu należy znaleźć artykuł na poparcie własnych przekonań na temat omawianej kwestii i napisać jego krótkie streszczenie. Trzeba studentom uświadomić, że kopiowanie cudzych słów jest plagiatem i należy jak najwięcej parafrazować.

## DEBUNKING MYTHS IN PSYCHOLOGY

I. In pairs, discuss some widely held assumptions:

1. Opposites attract.
2. If you're attacked, you are more likely to receive help when there are more people around.
3. It is better to express anger than to hold it in.

II. In pairs, discuss the questions below and write down your answers:

**1. On a scale from 1-5, how much better is spatial imagination in men than in women?**

1 2 3 4 5

**2. On a scale from 1-5, mark the superiority of women over men at grammar and vocabulary:**

1 2 3 4 5

**3. Discuss in pairs – What is the Rorschach test and how accurate is it in diagnosing mental conditions?**

**4. What kind of learners can people be?**

- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| a) visual       | d) all of the above                                  |
| b) auditory     | e) it depends on the task, not on the learning style |
| c) kinaesthetic |  |

**5. When it comes to your achievements when studying, what percent is down to nature (your genes) and how much is nurture (your upbringing)?**

.....

**6. Which hemisphere, left or right, is more dominant when**

- |                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| – playing a musical instrument | – playing snooker |
| – doing maths                  | – dancing ballet  |

**7. What percent of your brain do you use on a daily basis?**

.....

**8. Now watch a TED talk entitled “Ten myths about psychology: debunked” and see if you were right (0:00-8:00). Are you surprised by any of the myths not being true? You can find the video here:**

You can find the video here: [https://www.ted.com/talks/ben\\_ambridge\\_10\\_myths\\_about\\_psychology\\_debunked#t-674933](https://www.ted.com/talks/ben_ambridge_10_myths_about_psychology_debunked#t-674933)

**9. For homework, watch the rest of the TED talk and answer the questions:**

- A. Does listening to Mozart make you more clever?  
.....
- B. Is how we choose a partner determined by culture or is it similar across the globe?  
.....
- C. What is a winning streak/the hot hand and does it exist?  
.....
- D. How can you tell whether somebody is lying or telling the truth when observing their behaviour?
- |                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| – by their body language  | – both                    |
| – the tone of their voice | – it cannot be determined |

**III. You are going to watch two videos about the influence of positive thinking on curing cancer.**

**1. Discuss – can positive thinking increase your chances of surviving e.g., breast cancer? Is there scientific proof that we can heal ourselves?**

**2. Work in pairs and look up the meaning of the items of vocabulary given below:**

|                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| kidney failure .....      | Krebiozen .....         |
| diabetes .....            | hexed .....             |
| thyroid diseases .....    | to hyperventilate ..... |
| autoimmune diseases ..... | remission .....         |
| .....                     | a midwife .....         |
| lymphosarcoma .....       |                         |

**3. Are you familiar with the placebo and the nocebo effect? How do they work?**

**4. Now watch a TED talk by Lissa Rankin, MD, and answer the questions below.**

You can find the video here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWQfe\\_\\_fNbs&t=935s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWQfe__fNbs&t=935s) (0:00-5:43)

- A. Why does Lisa call the placebo effect a thorn in the side of the medical establishment?  
.....
- B. Why is the placebo effect excellent news?  
.....
- C. What’s the spontaneous remission project?  
.....
- D. What was Mr. Wright’s problem?  
.....
- E. Why couldn’t Mr. Wright get Krebiozen?  
.....
- F. What did the initial reports on Krebiozen state?  
.....
- G. What was Mr. Wright injected with the second time?  
.....
- H. What did the midwife say?  
.....
- I. What happened to the last girl?  
.....

**5. You’re about to watch an interview with Barbara Ehrenreich, a writer and a cancer survivor. Find one synonym for each vocabulary item given below to better understand the video you are about to watch:**

**exhortations** – .....

*For example, the inclusion in an advertisement of a direct exhortation to children to buy products is banned across the European Union.*

**mobilise e.g., your strength** – .....

*But the political will has to be mobilised, in order to mobilise the resources.*

**pervasive** – .....

*There is no fundamental progress in sight regarding the fight against all-pervasive corruption.*

**6. Watch Barbara Ehrenreich, PhD, giving an interview on her new book *Bright-Sided* and answer the questions:**

You can find the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrXzcXLtuhU> (0:00-4:00)

A. What did she open her book with?  
.....

B. When was she diagnosed with cancer?  
.....

C. What is cancer not seen as, in American culture?  
.....

D. What did she find when she reached out for help?  
.....

E. Why does she call positive thinking a burden?  
.....

F. What is the widespread notion concerning cancer?  
.....

G. What isn't clear?  
.....

**7. Which speaker do you find more convincing?**

**8. Find an article supporting what you think is true. Make sure that the source is credible. Read the article and write a short summary of the main points and include the information about the source.**

**BE CAREFUL**

When summarising a text, you need to give credit to the author, otherwise, your work might be considered plagiarism (i.e., copying someone's words and ideas and pretending they are your own). Remember to use your own words as much as possible. Paraphrase instead of copying.

Example: **According to Barbara Ehrenreich, there is no correlation between positive thinking and having a greater chance of survival.**



.....

.....

.....

.....

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.....



## KEY

### I.

1. When it comes to interpersonal relationships, opposites *don't* attract. Dozens of studies demonstrate that people with similar personality traits are more likely to be attracted to and spend time with each other than people with dissimilar personality traits.
2. Research has shown that one person is more likely to act than a group of people, who might hope that a person standing next to them will react and that will save them the trouble.
3. More than 40 years of research reveals that expressing anger directly toward another person or indirectly toward an object actually turns up the heat on aggression.

Source: <http://www.skeptic.com/eskeptic/10-09-01/>

### II.

1. The difference is slight (30% of women are better than the average man).
2. The difference is slight (30% of men are better than the average woman).
3. The Rorschach Inkblot Test is a projective psychological test consisting of 10 inkblots printed on cards (five in black and white, five in colour) created in 1921 with the publication of *Psychodiagnostik* by Hermann Rorschach. During the 1940s and 1950s, the test was synonymous with clinical psychology.

*My commentary: It is highly controversial and my students claim it has recently stopped being used, but I believe some psychologists still rely on it in diagnosing mental conditions. I have not found any information to support the statement that the test isn't used anymore. Reliable, though, it is not and shouldn't be used as the means for the final diagnosis. Also, the "correct" answers can now be found on the internet which further undermines its reliability.*

4. You learn using all your senses.

5. It is mostly your genes (about 58%), so you can blame your parents.
6. You use both of your hemispheres; it's all about their connectivity.
7. All of your brain. Even the simplest actions involve most of your brain.
8. *The students listen to the TED talk and correct their answers.*
9. (homework)
  - A. No, it does not. Listening to something you like may boost your brain activity for a while, though.
  - B. It is similar – for women, it is the promise of stability, and for men, sadly, it's the looks.
  - C. According to the statistics, there is no such thing.
  - D. You can't really tell.

### III.

1. Suggested answer: It is really hard to say – positive thinking doesn't cure cancer, but a positive attitude helps one to keep trying to do something. The research done so far isn't conclusive, but the studies which support the claim are not reliable because they were conducted on a small number of patients.

2.

kidney failure – when one's kidneys shut down. Symptoms of kidney failure are due to the build-up of waste products and excess fluid in the body that may cause weakness, shortness of breath, lethargy, swelling, and confusion.

diabetes – describes a group of metabolic diseases in which the person has high blood glucose (blood sugar), either because insulin production is inadequate, or because the body's cells do not respond properly to insulin, or both. Patients with high blood sugar will typically experience polyuria (frequent urination), they will become increasingly thirsty (polydipsia) and hungry (polyphagia).

thyroid diseases e.g., hyperthyroidism (when there is an excess of thyroid hormones; the symptoms include restlessness, agitation, anxiety, tremors, weight loss despite an increased appetite, sweating, rapid heart rate, intolerance to heat, and frequent bowel movements); hypothyroidism (when there are not enough thyroid hormones; the symptom include depression, fatigue, hair loss, memory loss, dry, rough skin, and constipation).

autoimmune diseases – autoimmune diseases develop when your immune system, which defends your body against disease, decides your healthy cells are foreign. As a result, your immune system attacks healthy cells. Depending on the type, an autoimmune disease can affect one or many different types of body tissue. It can also cause abnormal organ growth and changes in organ function.

lymphosarcoma – this is a cancer of the lymphocytes (a type of blood cell) and lymphoid tissues

Krebiozen – this was a commercial product claimed to have been prepared from the blood of horses previously injected with bacteria. It was later determined that Krebiozen was simple mineral oil that contained the dietary supplement creatine.

hexed – cursed, bewitched (this term obviously doesn't come from medical literature)

to hyperventilate – hyperventilation is a condition in which you suddenly start to breathe very quickly. Healthy breathing occurs with a healthy balance between breathing in oxygen and breathing out carbon dioxide. You upset this balance when you hyperventilate by exhaling more than you inhale. This causes a rapid reduction in carbon dioxide in the body

remission – a temporary diminution of the severity of disease or pain (but it does not necessarily mean you are cured)

Source: <http://www.medicinenet.com>; <http://www.healthline.com>

midwife – a professional in midwifery, specializing in pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum, women's sexual and reproductive health (including annual gynaecological examinations, family planning, menopausal care and others), and newborn care.

### 3.

A placebo is anything that seems to be a “real” medical treatment – but isn't. It could be a pill, a shot, or some other type of “fake” treatment.

The nocebo effect – a sort of negative placebo effect called the *nocebo* effect. It's what happens when you're given a sugar pill, are told it's a drug that has terrible side effects, then start to exhibit these symptoms.

### 4.

- A. Because it comes between bringing in new treatments and surgeries.
- B. Because it's concrete evidence that the body can heal itself.
- C. It is a database compiled by the Institute of Noetic Sciences – 3500 case studies of patients who have survived seemingly incurable illnesses.
- D. He had lymphosarcoma.
- E. Because he didn't meet the requirements of the trials – he would have had to have 3 months to live and he had less than that, according to his doctor.
- F. That it wasn't really working.
- G. Distilled water.
- H. That all the girls would die at a young age – before turning 16, 21 and 23.
- I. She went to the local hospital to get help, but still died.

**5.**

exhortations – e.g., urging, encouraging

The inclusion in an advertisement of a direct exhortation to children to buy products is banned across the European Union.

mobilise e.g., your strength – e.g., collect, garner

But the political will has to be mobilised, in order to mobilise the resources.

pervasive – e.g., omnipresent

There is no fundamental progress in sight regarding the fight against all-pervasive corruption.

**6.**

- A.** A critical analysis of the culture surrounding breast cancer in the USA and her own experience with having breast cancer.
- B.** In 2000.
- C.** As a problem or even an annoyance.
- D.** Everyone urged her to be positive.
- E.** Because you're already suffering from the disease and you have to constantly worry about your mood.
- F.** That your immune system will be boosted if you are thinking positively.
- G.** Whether the immune system has anything to do with recovering from cancer and whether you get it in the first place.

**7.**

I find both of them very annoying because of their smugness, but I find Lissa Rankin very suspicious, as she gives an example of the Spontaneous Remission Project, which has registered 3500 cases, so VERY few, considering the number of people suffering from those diseases in the US – you could say it is insignificant. Also, she used to be a physician, but has never treated cancer (she used to be an obstetrician/gynaecologist).

Barbara Ehrenreich, on the other hand, has a PhD in cellular immunology (but she obtained it in 1968 and is a writer, not a scientist).

As of today, the jury is still out but, technically, there's too little evidence to support the theory of the beneficial influence of positive thinking on cancer. Still, positive thinking has a number of benefits for those suffering from other diseases and, for example, are undergoing physiotherapy – if you are more positive, you may try harder.

**8. Homework**

It is important to tell students not to plagiarize the articles and paraphrase as much as possible.