

# THIS MAY BE MISSING FROM YOUR MEDICINE CABINET

*By: Saja Zidan*

It's been a long week. You wake up on your day off and immediately notice that something does not feel right. Your throat is extremely sore, your whole body aches, and your room feels colder than usual. Your first instinct to combat these symptoms that are hindering you from enjoying your day off is to go searching through your medicine cabinet.

This scenario is a reality for many individuals that experience any symptoms related to an illness. Although medicine is practical, can there be an alternative that can't be found in the aisles of your local drug store? The possible cure for an individual's battle against an illness may not even cost them a single cent. This priceless reliever is known as positivity or optimism.

As children, most of us were taught to associate positivity with smiley faces and sunshine. However, positivity and optimism can be reflected in more ways than just a smiling face. In fact, positivity and optimism can affect the physical health of individuals. According to the Mayo Clinic, maintaining positive thinking can help individuals increase their lifespan, combat depression, acquire a greater resistance to the common cold, and have better cardiovascular health. Positive thinking is able to have a great influence on the physical health of individuals through the chemical messengers in the brain known

as neurotransmitters. Neurotransmitters, like serotonin and dopamine, rise during positive thinking. When these neurotransmitters are high, the physical body can experience lower blood pressure and stress levels. Therefore, diseases related to high blood pressure and stress levels can be prevented and treated by thinking positively and having an optimistic outlook on life.

Under this notion, effects like the placebo effect are proven to be functional. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the placebo effect occurs when an individual thinks positively of the possible cure that is prescribed to them, despite not actually receiving the real treatment. Patients are given a fake treatment or a pill that looks similar to the real one, and are tricked into believing that they are receiving the real medication. Because the patients believe that they are undergoing the real treatment, they believe that the treatment will work and help alleviate some of their symptoms. This positive thinking and optimistic outlook on the results of the treatment releases serotonin and dopamine in the brain, which results in the decrease of factors that are responsible for the symptoms the patients suffer from, and ultimately makes them feel better