

Acetaminophen and Emotions

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In our hectic culture today, it's very common to deal with pain by popping a couple of Tylenol, only one of many over the counter pain medications containing Acetaminophen. We often feel we don't have time to deal with the source of the pain, so our main objective is to dull it quickly so we can carry on.



However, researchers at Ohio State University found that Acetaminophen reduces not only our own pain, but our level of compassion and empathy towards others' suffering as well. The study involved reading short stories with extremely sad or disturbing scenarios. While they don't yet know the exact mechanism behind this response, study participants given Acetaminophen had markedly reduced levels of empathy for the characters in the stories, rating their levels of pain much lower than the placebo group did.

In another study, the same researchers showed that Acetaminophen reduces our pleasure level as well. Groups were shown pictures of highly pleasant images, such as children playing with kittens, as well as disturbing pictures including malnourished children. Those taking Acetaminophen rated all the pictures as having less emotional impact than the placebo group. In short, Acetaminophen reduces one's emotional response at both ends of the spectrum--pleasure and pain— of both our own feelings, and our perceptions of others' feelings. This has enormous implications for our ability to show compassion and empathy in personal relationships, and in all aspects of social life.

Natural healing seeks to address the underlying cause for physical or emotional distress. By healing at the source, rather than simply blunting the pain, we come to a deeper understanding of the origins of our distress, and hence, a greater compassion for others' suffering. The School of Natural Healing offers educational programs to teach us to heal ourselves naturally, through herbs, essential oils, and other methods that work with the body rather than bypassing its wisdom.

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