

We are continually pushing out the boundaries of our knowledge through the wonders of science.

Whilst our understanding of the universe grows there is one area where our understanding remains an elusive dream.

The Ten Greatest Unsolved Mysteries of the Mind.

10. Why do we dream?

Scientists are still trying to unravel this mystery.

It's possible that dreaming exercises the brain by stimulating the movement of the signals between brain cells.

Are dreams also revitalising the chemical synapses, the specialised junctions through which the nervous system connects to, and controls, the other systems of the body.

Who knows?

Another theory is that people dream about the day's events, helping to firm up thoughts and memories and even solving problems.

Dreaming occurs during the period of deepest sleep, known as Rapid Eye Movement

9. Humans can't seem to get enough of it! In fact it's so crucial we spend more than a quarter of our lives at it.

You have a dirty mind, we're talking about sleep.

Yet why we actually need sleep is still not known.

One thing is certain, sleep is crucial for survival in mammals.

Extended sleeplessness can lead to mood swings, hallucination, and in extreme cases, death.

There are two states of sleep, non-rapid eye movement (NREM), during which the brain exhibits low metabolic activity, and rapid eye movement (REM), already mentioned during which the brain is very active.

It's possible that NREM sleep gives

your body a break, which saves energy, similar to hibernation.

8. Phantom Feelings

It's estimated that about 80 percent of amputees still experience all the sensations, including pain, from the missing limb, known as "Phantom Limb".

One explanation says that the nerves area where the limb severed create new connections to the spinal cord which then continue to send signals to the brain as if the missing limb was still there.

Another possibility is that the brain is "hard-wired" to operate as if the body were fully intact—meaning the brain holds a blueprint of the body with all parts attached.

7. What makes us tick?

Residing in the hypothalamus of the brain, the suprachiasmatic nucleus, or biological clock, programs the body to follow a 24-hour, or circadian, rhythm.

The most obvious sign of this circadian rhythm is the sleep-wake cycle, but the biological clock also affects digestion, body temperature, blood pressure, and hormone production.

Researchers have found that light intensity can adjust the clock forward or backward by regulating the hormone melatonin.

Experiments are underway to see if melatonin supplements could help prevent jet lag, the drowsy, achy feeling you get when "jetting" across time zones.

6. Some experiences are hard to forget, but how does a person hold onto these personal images?

What is it in our minds that stores these memories in such detail? The BBQ smell, the taste, the warmth of the sun.

Using brain-imaging techniques, scientists are finding that the hippocampus, an area of the brain, could act as a memory box.

But this storage area isn't too fussy as it stores fact and fictional occurrences.

To distinguish between fact and fiction, recalling the subject in context is much more difficult when the event didn't actually occur.

5. Laughter is no joke!

Scientists have found that during a good laugh three parts of the brain are stimulated.

A thinking part that helps you get the joke, a movement area that tells your muscles to move, and an emotional region that causes the light-headed feeling.

But the reason why different people find different things funny remains a mystery, the only certain thing is that a good laugh makes you feel a lot better.

4. What makes us the way we are?

The question of whether our thoughts and personalities are controlled by genes or environment, there is growing evidence that it could be either or both!

The study of individual genes points to many human traits that we have little control over, yet in many areas, the people around us and our upbringing have been shown to heavily influence who we are and what we do.

3. Why is everyone, except me, getting older?

As we age, the body's repair mechanisms get out of shape and our resistance to physical injury and stress declines.

Theories for why people age can be divided into two categories:

A) Like other human characteristics, aging could just be a part of human genetics and is somehow beneficial.

B) In the less optimistic view, aging has no purpose and results from cellular damage that occurs over a person's lifetime.

2. Why don't we live forever?

A pioneering field called cryonics could give some people two lives.

Cryonics centres, store bodies for preservation in vats filled with liquid nitrogen at temperatures of minus 320 degrees Fahrenheit (78 Kelvin).

The idea is that a person who dies from a presently incurable disease could be thawed and revived in the future when a cure has been found.

These human ice lollies, are positioned head down. That way, if there were ever a leak in the tank, the brain would stay submerged in the cold liquid.

Not one of the cryopreserved bodies has been revived, because that technology doesn't exist.

For one, if the body isn't thawed at exactly the right temperature, the person's cells could turn to ice and blast into pieces.

1. When you wake in the morning you move from the unconscious to the conscious world.

What is conscious?

This complex topic has mystified us since antiquity.

Only recently have neuroscientists considered consciousness a realistic research topic.

The greatest brainteaser in this field has been to explain how processes in the brain give rise to subjective experiences.

Why do we feel love or pain, see red or blue, love or hate?

There are many questions, but no answers.

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