

A MINI GUIDE TO YOUR BRAIN & BODY

# YOUR BRAIN IS DOING THAT ON PURPOSE?!

7 Surprising things your brain and body  
do every day ***without you even noticing***

{ **HEALTHY  
MIND** psychology

# THERE'S A LOT GOING ON BEHIND THE SCENES.

Your brain and body are processing an extraordinary amount of information every moment of the day. Most of it never reaches your conscious awareness. Your brain filters information, makes predictions, notices potential problems, interprets sensations and draws on previous experiences to help you navigate everyday life.

And sometimes the results are rather strange.

Why can one negative comment outweigh ten lovely ones? Why does thinking about Thursday's meeting make your shoulders tense on Monday? And why, now that I've mentioned it, are you suddenly aware of where your tongue is sitting in your mouth?

This little guide explores seven everyday examples of your brain and body quietly doing their thing.

Some are useful. Some are frustrating. And some are just fascinating.

Let's see how many you recognise...



# 01

## THINGS YOUR BRAIN DOES WITHOUT ASKING

### IT DECIDES WHAT YOU GET TO NOTICE

Until I mention the feeling of your clothes against your skin, the background sounds around you or the position of your tongue... you probably aren't consciously thinking about any of them. Those sensations were already there.

Your brain is constantly filtering sensory information so that everything doesn't demand your attention at once. When your attention shifts towards something, however, it can suddenly become surprisingly noticeable.

#### **TRY THIS:**

Stop for five seconds.

What can you hear right now that you hadn't noticed before reading that sentence?

02

# THINGS YOUR BRAIN DOES WITHOUT ASKING

## IT FILLS IN THE GAPS

Your brain doesn't simply record the world around you like a camera. It interprets what it receives using context, expectations and previous experiences.

This helps us make sense of incomplete information quickly, but it also means two people can experience the same situation and interpret it differently.

**What we experience and what objectively happened aren't always exactly the same thing**

## IT GIVES THE NEGATIVE STUFF VIP TREATMENT

Ten people tell you that you did a brilliant job.  
One person makes a slightly critical comment.  
Guess which one your brain decides deserves a 2am replay?  
Our brains are particularly good at noticing information that might indicate a problem or threat. From a survival perspective, paying attention to potential danger was useful. Unfortunately, the same tendency can mean negative experiences sometimes feel much louder than positive ones.

03

**More memorable doesn't necessarily mean more important**

### TRY THIS:

Think of something negative you've been replaying recently.  
Now deliberately bring to mind three things that went well around the same time.

Not to cancel out the negative experience, simply to widen the picture your brain is holding.

# 04

## THINGS YOUR BRAIN DOES WITHOUT ASKING

### IT CAN SEND YOUR BODY INTO NEXT THURSDAY

Your brain is constantly predicting and preparing.

That means simply imagining an upcoming meeting, appointment or difficult conversation can create very real sensations in the present.

Your stomach tightens. Your heart beats faster. Your shoulders creep towards your ears.

The event isn't happening yet, but your brain is already preparing for what it thinks might happen.

**Sometimes our bodies are responding to the future we're imagining, rather than the moment we're actually in**

### IT KEEPS TRACK OF YOUR BODY WITHOUT YOU LOOKING

Close your eyes and lift your hand.

You still know roughly where it is.

That ability is called proprioception — your brain receives information that helps it understand where your body is in space.

You also receive information from inside your body through interoception, including sensations associated with hunger, temperature, heartbeat, breathing and needing the toilet. Most of this conversation happens quietly in the background.

# 05

#### **TRY THIS:**

Without changing anything, notice your breathing.

Fast or slow? Deep or shallow? Where in your body can you feel it most?

# 06

## THINGS YOUR BRAIN DOES WITHOUT ASKING

### IT CAN GET TIRED OF CHOOSING

At 9am, comparing twelve options might feel perfectly manageable. By 6pm, someone asking what you want for dinner can feel like an unreasonable personal attack.

Making decisions requires mental effort, particularly when we're already tired, stressed or carrying a lot of information.

This is why routines and default choices can sometimes feel surprisingly freeing. They remove some of the tiny decisions competing for our attention.

**Sometimes fewer choices feel better than more**

#### TRY THIS:

What is one recurring decision you could make once, rather than repeatedly?

Perhaps a regular breakfast, a default weekday lunch, a set time for a task or even a shortlist of five easy dinners.



# 07

## THINGS YOUR BRAIN DOES WITHOUT ASKING

### IT CHANGES DEPENDING ON WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON

"I'm lazy." "I'm antisocial." "I'm too sensitive." "I'm terrible at making decisions."

We can be very quick to turn an experience into a description of who we are. But behaviour doesn't happen in isolation. Sleep, pain, hunger, stress, sensory input, our environment, other people and the demands we're facing can all influence the version of ourselves that shows up.

Sometimes the person who thinks "I can't cope with anything today" is simply exhausted, hungry and trying to answer seventeen emails while someone is drilling next door.

**Before you label yourself, look at the context.**

#### **TRY THIS:**

Next time you catch yourself saying: "I'm just the sort of person who..."

Try replacing it with: "I notice I feel/do this when..."

See whether the story changes.

# YOU EXPERIENCE MORE THAN YOU REALISE

Your brain and body are constantly sensing, filtering, predicting, interpreting and responding.

You don't need to notice or analyse everything they do.

But becoming curious about what is happening behind the scenes can sometimes help us understand our experiences differently.

Instead of immediately asking:

“  
“WHAT’S WRONG WITH ME?”  
”

Perhaps try:

“  
“WHAT ELSE MIGHT BE  
GOING ON HERE?”  
”

Sometimes widening the question changes the answer.

## **Want to explore this further?**

I share more about the relationship between the brain, body, pain and our everyday experiences on my website - [www.healthymindpsychology.co.uk/](http://www.healthymindpsychology.co.uk/)