DEAR DONDRITES,

We're up to our neck in the busy-season: We're right in the middle of internships, exams are slowly creeping up on us and worst of all, we have to go home and spend time with our families!

We're kidding of course. It's a busy time for everyone, but we hope you can all find some enjoyment in seeing your families, some well-deserved rest in the two weeks of freedom and some satisfaction in seeing the night sky light up at New Year's Eve.

When January comes around, so will the exams and most of Dondrite will take it easy. So we'll have fewer events to report, but keep on reading anyway to find your monthly dose of memes (it's a spicy one), information on past and future events, and as a special, get to know the resolutions of your fellow students!

We had a blast in the past year and we hope the next is going to be even better! We wish you a great time off during the Christmas break and a very, very happy new year!

DECEMBER

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS AND HOW TO KEEP THEM

New Decade, New Decisions

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS. We all have them, only some of us keep them. Us humans are hard-wired against change. If it works, it works. Habit ruleth man. That is what neuroscience teaches us. Or does it? What insights from psychology and cognitive neuroscience can we use to make a permanent change?

THE HABITUAL BRAIN

The brain does not like change. Indeed, it evolved specifically to become very good at a thing, and then do it over and over again. A valid survival strategy, but one that seems directly antagonistic to your goals. That's something we need to deal with, but also can use to your advantage. The lesson is clear: habits need to *habituate (which is kinda where that word comes from...)*. When starting a new habit: stick with it. Consistently, every day, at the same time, in the same way. Your brain is basically like a metal wire: if you bend it the same way again and again, eventually it will take that shape, all by itself. Research shows it takes about a month to get these new habits to land. Repetition, repetition, repetition.

Now, this sounds hard, so make it easier on yourself. Remove barriers that might stand in the way (e.g. get a gym closer by your place), add reminders to stick to it (e.g. in your phone; and stick to those reminders), integrate it into your already exisiting routine, and most importantly: do so incrementally. When it comes to behaviour-change, going big definitely means going home. Change only works in small steps. Only once the new behaviour is routine can you go on to the next.

Likewise, unhelp your old habits: remove known temptations, clear your external environment of any cues that might induce these old habits. The brain loves going down a well-traveled road, so it's better to avoid that road altogether.

Lastly,: deflect, trigger, and replace. When your resolution is stop an old habit (e.g. smoking), try to recognise your triggers (e.g. coffee breaks), avoid them if possible, and otherwise deflect or replace your habit (e.g. snap your fingers when you reach for a sigarette, or take that moment to indulge another reward (such as a Facebook-scroll or a sweet.))

TIPS AND TRICKS FROM YOUR FRIENDLY LOCAL....

....NEUROPHARMACOLOGIST: Increase your serotonin! Just ask Roshan Cools, people with higher serotonin levels are better at breaking old and establishing new habits, and generally have a better affect. This might sounds patronising, but there are wayts to manage your serotonin levels (other than SSRIs [NB: We do NOT recommend SSRIs as a valid option to attain one's New Year's resolutions!]). Exposure to light, both natural circadian light (e.g. Dawn-Dusk Stimulation or... just going outside) and bright light therapy (>3000 lux) have beneficial effects on sertonin (and you sleep better too!). A good diet, rich in Tryptophan (precursors) can help tremendously as well, as can regular physical exercise (oh you pesky physical exercise, you just keep popping up in like, every health behaviour). Lastly, as ever: avoid stress. Also, don't forget to get your hands on that sweet, sweet dopamine. Just simply consistently associating your new habit with a reward might just do the trick.

...BEHAVIOURAL NEUROSCIENTIST: Watch out for that pesky amygdala. There's nothing that little bugger loves more than slamming on the brake, forcing you right back into your old patterns, something that should be avoided as mentioned before. But you can also use that: if you, when the amygdala brakes the system, break the amygdala, i.e.: if in such moments you force yourself into a new habit, that becomes the amygdala's go-to button to push, and you trick the amygdala into actually getting you onto your new behaviour. Likewise, don't forget to use your lovely prefrontal cortex (PFC) and associated cognitive control/attentional system! It's when you don't pay attention that you go into auto-mode. Try and identify when this happens and take conscious effort to stick to your resolution!

....SOCIAL NEUROSCIENTIST: That lovely PFC also has another nice function to utilise: use others! Not only the classic 'get yourself a gym-buddy' social contract thing, but research also consistently shows that having people around you, as much as 3 connections removed, consistently raises people's ability to enact certain health behaviours. Surround yourself with who-you-wanna-be-like.

....NEUROLINGUIST: That darn Sapir-Whorf hypothesis might just still be good for something; watch your language, both in- and outside your head. Restructuring your language has a huge impact on how you perceive your goals, and your attaintment of them. Try and add a 'but' after negative thoughts regarding your (failing to stick to) resolutions, and root out any negative phrasing (see below).

A WORD ON GOAL AND EXPECTATION MANAGEMENT, CHOOSING BATTLES, AND THE MYTH OF WILLPOWER

Psychologically, the most important thing when it comes to your resolutions is **expectation management**. And science has shone quite some useful light on this! It is incredibly frustrating when that deadline you set yourself zooms you by, without having realised your resolution even a little bit. Some thoughts (not from me, but from actual science people):

Pick goals you can reach. Unattainable resolutions are of no use to anyone. Break your resolution up in smaller parts, and visualise yourself doing that (i.o. setting the goal of an outcome, set yourself the goal of the behaviour itself!), that way you can celebrate every time you've done it, instead of dreading how far away the finish line still seems to be. Writing out these steps, to the last detail, also makes this much easier to commit to. And if you do go wrong, don't mourn over it! You're a neuroscientist, see it as an experiment. When you fail: back to hypothesising you go. Analyse yourself and the situation: what was it that made it unattainable, and how can you remove that barrier? What can I do in the next phase of the experiment to ensure success?

Speaking of negative affect: utilise a little CBT. When a negative thought about your resolution pops up: relabel, reattribute, refocus, and revalue. If, for example, you think 'see, I'm a terrible klutz', relabel: that's a habitual thought, not an actual thought; reattribute: that thought itself is my old habit, I need to suppress it, it isn't needed anymore; refocus: I *was* a terrible klutz, *but* I'm doing something about it now; and revalue: that thought was an automatic one, and thus entirely useless. I ain't listening to it.

However, to keep your motivation, **don't forget why you're doing it!** Research shows focussing on both your sub- and superordinate goals increases motivation, the superordinate allows you to be motivated as for why you're doing it, the subordinate keeps it attainable and allows you to celebrate success.

And lastly, most importantly: **expectation management.** Be fair to yourself, and be realistic, that avoids any frustration. You don't need to be the best, and any improvement means you've already defeated your evolutionary conservative little grey blob at its own game. Don't get sad if you didn't manage to find 'the one' this year, no one could 'just' do that. Don't fool yourself into believing 2020 will be 'your' year, get it to be your year by focussing on those things and the people that give you joy, working on realistic personal goals, and you'll see: 2020 will be kind to you yet.

"Learn Python."

Incrementalise
Set a specific time, every day
Focus on subordinate goals, not the final one

"One good paper, one ideal PhD position and one healthy and happy family."

Divide it up into smaller goals that might lead to here and celebrate what you get! Surround yourself with 'ideal PhD' students.

"Drinking beer with the teachers at the Dondrite ball"

Now that's attainable!

"Take a nap in one of the sleeping-experiment beds"

No comment.

"Stop doubting myself!"

relabel, reattribute, refocus, revalue

"Spend more time with the people who care about me."

Make plans! Keep time free! Remind yourself regularly. Set a subordinate goal (e.g. film-night once a month). Let them know!

"My resolution is for this year is to not make any unrealistic resolutions that I won't be able to keep. So other than that, I probably won't have any resolutions."

That seems very wise

A WORD FROM THE
BOARD

Hi there, fellow Dondrites!

As the end of the year is approaching, we are looking forward to the Christmas holidays and the start of the mythical year 2020. For the past years we have all been anticipating this year as a proxy for 'the future' in general. When I was small, expectations were high: we thought flying cars would be commonplace, computers would be operated with holograms instead of old-fashioned keyboard and we would have a sprawling colony on either the moon or Mars, we weren't sure yet. As 2020 came closer, our expectations became more and more modest until we now know that we shouldn't expect any crazy developments in the next year. Or should we? What do we expect for next year, and, why not, the following decade? Let's ask our newest board members!

Jochem: Next year I think (or hope) that the development of the smartphone will truly reach its last phase where the PC and smartphone are fully integrated. This is a trend that has been going on for some years, but the bright developers have not been able to come up with a good bridge between the sizes of the laptop screen and smartphone, which are very useful for their current respective purposes, nor for the ease of typing larger texts on a keyboard and shorter texts on the touchscreen. Attempts have been made (hologram keyboard that can project on any flat surface, folding touchscreens, to name a few), so I think next year we might see the apotheosis of smartphone-PC integration. In 2030 we will have several fully functioning quantum computers, which will be owned by larger nations and corporations. These will be used on a regular basis to process large amounts of data for all the questions that we know then we can ask such a computer.

Eline: I have always been very bad at making predictions, hence I will keep these quite brief. However, I do have some hopes and dreams for the future! As Dondrite (and myself for that matter) has a neutral stance in political discussions, I will say that I hope that we, as the human race, will come up with a brilliant solution to the ongoing changes in the climate. I don't think we will have flying cars, however I do believe all cars will be electric by the end of this decade. I also believe we will find ways to provide for ourselves in green and efficient ways even better than we are already doing! As for the year 2020, I of course wish for everyone who is currently in their second year of the CNS Master to graduate, and for everyone in their first year have successfully started their Master's thesis!

We wish everyone very happy holidays and an exciting New Year's eve! See you all next year!
Cheers,

The board

RECENT DONDRITE
EVENTS

November 28th the Education committee organised an amazing GitHub workshop. In a full computer room, Dondrite and non-Dondrite members learned what Git and GitHub actually are, how to create push and pull requests, and what each other's favourite movies and emojis are. Again a special thanks to Kristijan Armeni and Sophie Arana, both PhD students at the DCCN, for making the time to instruct everyone!

Next to an educational event, of course a non-educational event took place! To celebrate Sinterklaas, a bunch of Dondrites met up in the Trigon canteen. We first enjoyed the traditional food and drinks that people brought, like Dutch pancakes, Italian pizzas in the shape of a Sinterklaas hat, German glühwein and Belgian jenever. Everybody also bought a gift which were unwrapped and distributed during a typical Dutch game with dices. When everyone was satisfied with for example a plant, cute mug, or a poo curling game, we did an online kahoot quiz. What seemed like a somewhat boring quiz suddenly turned out to be the announcement of the date, location and theme of the Dondrite & Donders Gala 2020, surprise! The rest of the evening was filled with playing games, and a Dutch children's tradition was shared: koekhappen. During koekhappen people try to eat 'gevulde speculaas' (in this case) that is just out of their reach without using their hands. When everyone left, they could collect their shoes that were filled with chocolate and other Sinterklaas candy by the one and only Sinterklaas. In the end, it was a fun and successful Sinterklaas event!

On the actual Sinterklaas evening, December 5th, it was time for another event we all eagerly waited for: the reveal of the big trip! After weeks of racking our brains on the mysterious hints the Travel committee was giving out, the waiting was finally over! On the Travel&Tonic borrel, through an amazing video, the hints (that kept us awake for nights trying to figure them out) were explained. This lead to the reveal of this year's big trip: Athens! The destination was received with great enthusiasm, considering the fact the sign-ups for the trip were full in just 1 hour!
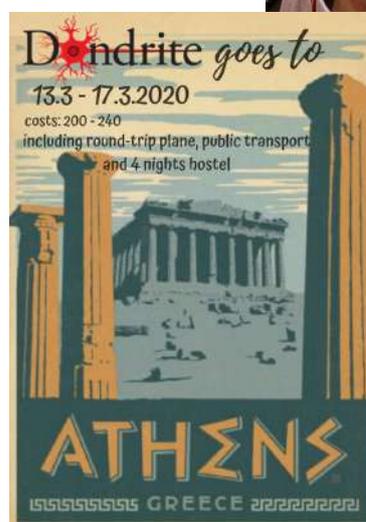
Tuesday December 17th, the education committee organised another successful scientific movie night! Everyone enjoyed a beer and pizza while the movie "Waking Life" was presented. Afterwards a fruitful discussion took place, where opinions on lucid dreaming were shared.

Last but definitely not least, there was the Beer Pong Tournament! In teams of 2 or 3, Dondrites competed against each other in thrilling beer pong games. Eventually, Bas and Michael became the champions of the tournament. Congratulations!

UPCOMING DONDRITE EVENTS

EXAM PREPARATION
7 January, 13:30-15:15, SP A 01.11 Neuroimaging
9 January, 10:30-12:15, SP A 01.08 Advanced Math
The Education Committee will help you prepare for your exams! Well, not necessarily all of them... But if you'd like to prepare for Neuroimaging 1 and Advanced Math, be sure to show up to the first week of the new year!
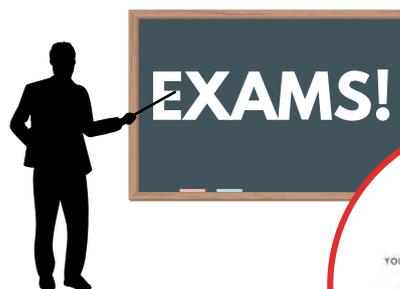
SOFT SNUGGLE SESSION
15 January, 13:00, Trigon
If you are looking for a break during the exam period, join us on this relaxing activity the 15th of January at 13h. We will meet at Trigon and then bike to the animal farm together to cuddle some animals!

MASQUERADE BALL | GALA 2020
7 March, 20:00, De Waagh
The Activity Committee invites you all to join us at the Gala, that will take place on the 7th of March at De Waagh! Get your tickets now through this link.

The Activity Committee of
DONDRITE
requests the honor of your presence at the

Masquerade Ball

Gala 2020

07.03.20 | SATURDAY | 20:00

@ De Waagh
Grote Markt 26, Nijmegen

Buy your €15 ticket here: http://ticketkantoor.nl/shop/dondrite2020gala

YOU'RE INVITED TO A RELAXING EXCURSION TO THE PETTING ZOO!

SOFT SNUGGLE SESSION

15.01.20 | WEDNESDAY | 13:00
@ Trigon Building

UPCOMING DONDERS EVENTS

Donders Session: Is Deep Learning a solution?
16 January, 10:00 - 12:00, Red Room (Trigon)

More information will follow

Donders Lecture: Christof Koch
27 January, 16:00 - 17:00

Team Science, Big Science and Open Science - In the Service of Neuroscience

Workshop: Autism (in Dutch)
28 January, 19:30 - 22:00, De Lindenberg, Ridderstraat 23, Nijmegen

Workshop Autisme, prikkelverwerking, en de rol van synesthesie

MONTHLY MEME

THALAMUS | OLFACTORY BULB

SMELL

FUN FACT

Did you know that Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) instituted the concept of celebrating the new year in 2000 BC and celebrated new year around the time of the vernal equinox, in mid-March? The early Roman calendar designated March 1 as the first day of the year. The calendar had just ten months, beginning with March. That the new year once began with the month of March is still reflected in some of the names of the months. September through December, our ninth through twelfth months, were originally positioned as the seventh through tenth months (Septem is Latin for "seven"; octo, "eight"; novem, "nine"; and decem, "ten").

NOTICEBOARD

Yearbook help wanted

Scribe is already busy starting on the 2019-2020 yearbook. We want to make it bigger and better, which is why we could use some extra help!

- Do you enjoy creating an amazing overview of the 2019-2020 academic year?
- Or do you have some great InDesign skills to make the yearbook look fabulous?

Then don't hesitate and join the yearbook team! If you have any questions, you can always contact us!

Hoodies & shirts

Good news everybody! The Board is happy to announce that the committee t-shirts have been ordered, as well as the flashy Dondrite hoodies!

Check your e-mail for payment details for the hoodies!

Nothing to do on Friday (20) or Saturday(21)?

Come see Tony's play, de Wondere Wereld van de Vogelbuurt (Dutch). Full of absurdist sketches about the roudiest neighbour-hood the Netherlands has ever seen. 20-12, 20:00 & 21-12, 14:00. Tickets €6.-.

Do you have anything you want to share here? Send us your message at
scribedondrite@gmail.com

CROSSWORD

The Netherlands is one of the many countries in the world to celebrate the end of the year on December 31st, by lighting loud and decorative fireworks.

Some people spend the evening with their families watching the "oudejaarsconference", and others go partying with friends. There are lots of ways to celebrate the end of the year, and in 2019's case, the end of a decade!

To get in the celebratory mood, fill out this month's New Year's themed crossword puzzle!

The crossword can be filled out using:

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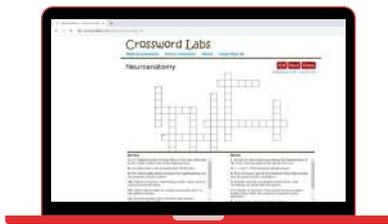
On the next page you will find the solution to last month's puzzle.

Across

2. A social gathering of invited guests, typically involving eating, drinking, and entertainment.
4. A period of ten years
6. A chart or series of pages showing the days, weeks, and months of a particular year, or giving particular seasonal information.
8. An extended period of leisure and recreation, especially one spent away from home or in traveling.
10. Indulge in enjoyable recollection of past events.
12. A call to a gathering of people to raise their glasses and drink together in honour of a person or thing, or an instance of drinking in this way.
14. The action of celebrating an important day or event.
15. A white sparkling wine named after the region it's produced.
16. The last month of the year.
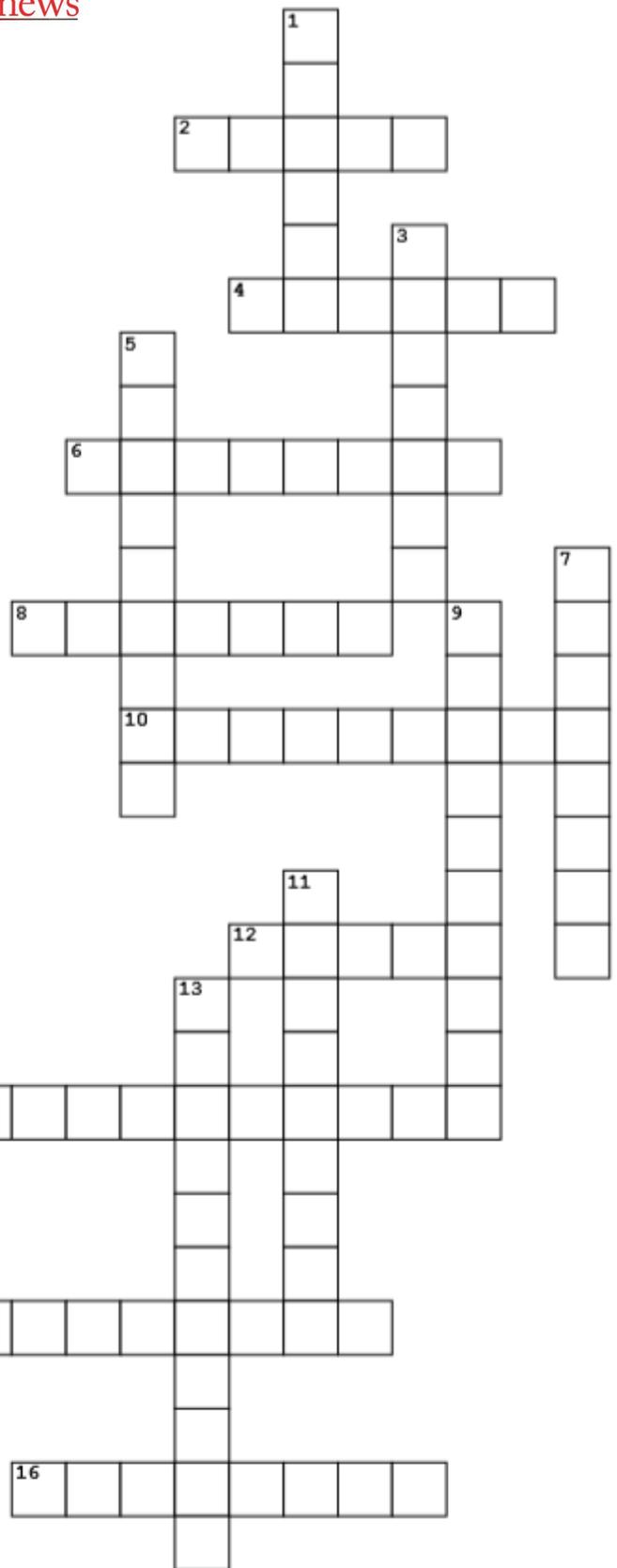
Down

1. A public procession, especially one celebrating a special day or event.
3. The first month of the year
5. A handheld firework that emits sparks.
7. A device containing gunpowder and other combustible chemicals which causes spectacular effects and explosions when ignited, used for display or in celebrations.
9. A firm decision to do or not to do something. Typically Associated with New Year's
11. An act of counting numerals in reverse order to zero, done right before midnight on New Year's eve.
13. A loud, explosive firework; a banger.

CROSSWORD solution

Across

2. A religious folk song or popular hymn, particularly one associated with Christmas. Also an old lady's name.

4. A large bird in the genus Meleagris, native to the Americas. Also a country.

5. The name of Sinterklaas's white horse.

8. Both Sinterklaas's and Santa Claus's entrance into your home.

9. Dutch word for the whip bad children (used to) get hit with by Sinterklaas' helpers.

10. A broad category of baked goods, typically flavored with ginger, cloves, nutmeg or cinnamon and sweetened with honey, sugar or molasses.

11. Sinterklaas's helper. Also a Dutch name.

12. A plant, which is part of common Christmas decorations. If you stand underneath is, you need to kiss.

15. A potato pancake fried in oil, usually eaten during Hanukkah.

16. Sinterklaas's hat.

18. The German word for mulled wine, a beverage usually made with red wine along with various mulling spices and sometimes raisins. It is served hot or warm and is alcoholic.

Down

1. "Deck the halls with boughs of ...."

3. Small, round, cookie-like confectioneries with a crispy texture, traditionally associated with the early December Sinterklaas festivities.

6. How Antiochus IV Epiphanes was called in Syria. Translates to "mad man".

7. A word associated with Sinterklaas. Something to do with a rooster. Rhymes with the Dutch word for small shoe.

9. Santa Claus's favourite red-nosed reindeer.

11. Something (almost) all kids get during the holiday season.

13. The (ninth) candle used to light the other eight candles during Hanukkah

14. A rich, sweetened, dairy-based beverage, usually consumed over the Christmas season.

17. White stuff that is covering everything outside in the winter season. Also cold.

191