

# ON THE BRAIN

THE HARVARD MAHONEY NEUROSCIENCE INSTITUTE LETTER

## Fly-Fishing and the Brain



In the mid-nineteenth century, the avid fly-fisherman and physician James A. Hensall, MD, elucidated what for many is the allure of that often solitary form of angling.

What is it about this so-called quiet sport, with its incantation of rod and fly, river and nature, a sport of both stealth and strategy, that helps to lessen stress and calm the brain?

Herbert Benson, MD '61, the Mind Body Medicine Professor of Medicine at HMS and director emeritus of the Benson-Henry Institute at Massachusetts General Hospital, says humankind has learned over millennia how to turn off stress by “breaking the train of everyday thinking.”

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## Faculty First Person: David Ginty, PhD



The sense of touch endows us with a remarkable capacity to perceive and respond to the physical world—it allows us to recognize objects held in our hands, to discriminate between different textures and shapes, and to mediate sensory-motor feedback and the coordination of body movements.

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## In the News

### ‘New Clarity’ Against Alzheimer’s

The past year has been a hopeful one in the fight against Alzheimer’s disease. New findings have brought clarity to understanding the disease’s progress; new drugs to attack it are in trials.

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### Insight into seeing

Researchers compare neurons in optic nerves to find why some regenerate and others don’t. A new study is the first to allow researchers to look at living and dead neurons side by side from a damaged optic nerve. [Read more »](#)

### Breath Taking

A nerve neglected in today’s era of molecular and genetic analysis has yielded a surprising secret. A handful of neurons control breathing in a fine-tuned but powerful way, scientists have discovered in mice. The findings suggest new ways of considering clinical conditions related to the vagus nerve. [Read more »](#)