Meditation is nothing new: It’s a fixture of many religions, and has been practice for thousands of years. However, scientific understanding of how meditation changes the body is ever-increasing. Some studies indicate that meditation can physically change the brain and body, capable of reducing blood pressure, symptoms of anxiety and depression, and insomnia.
But it’s perhaps the changes to the brain that meditation can induce that are the most striking.

In 2011, researchers reported in Psychiatry Research: Neuroimaging that eight-weeks of engaging in an average of 27 minutes a day of meditation results in differences in the brain. The study included two groups of people who had never meditated any more. One continued to not meditate, while the other was put into a mindfulness-based stress reduction program at the University of Massachusetts Center for Mindfulness.

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Magnetic resonance (MR) images were taken of the brain structure of the 16 participants two weeks before and two weeks after they took part in the program, which included meditation that focused on non-judgemental awareness of sensations, feelings, and the state of their mind. These brain scans revealed that the group that meditated, compared to the group that did not, had increased gray-matter density in the brain’s hippocampus and decreased gray-matter density in the amygdala.

Interestingly, the amygdala interacts with the body’s “fight-or-flight” response while the hippocampus is involved with introspection, learning, and memory.

Amishi Jha, a neuroscientist who was not a part of this study, told The Harvard Gazette that these results shed “light on the mechanism of action of mindfulness-based training,” showing that stress can not only be reduced after eight weeks of this training but also that training corresponds to structural changes in the brain.

Other work by the same team has also found that meditation causes 50-year old meditators to have the same amount of gray matter as 25-year olds. And while other researchers are careful to say that meditation isn’t some magic cure for one’s problems, it does seem like it’s worth a shot.

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Some say that out of all the objects in the universe, the human brain is the most complex. Much of what makes us uniquely human — our emotions, memories, consciousness — stems from this 3-pound organ, yet the bulk of what we know about the brain comes from studying animals.

In a landmark new study, researchers have recreated the human forebrain using 3D brain organoids — tiny cellular models of the brain — that they say successfully model late stages of brain development for the first time. The model opens a window onto the development of the human forebrain, which plays a key role in the processing of information related to complex cognitive activities, sensory processing, and motor function.
A poisonous hunt.

While they start strong, Pokémon generations often fall off in popularity shortly after the initial release when most fans have already completed the main story, leaving little reason to return. But *Pokémon Sword and Shield* are a bit different — especially when Nintendo adds a Gigantamax version of one of the coolest new Pokémon of this generation to the game: the “Punk” Pokémon.

The addition of Max Raid Battles and Pokémon Dens have extended the game’s lifetime indefinitely. Players come back each month to capture a new Gigantamax Pokémon, which are often troublesome to find in the base game. The regular events also add free item codes to the game and bolster encounters with select other Gigantamax ‘mons.

This month, let’s gather around a local Pokémon Den to capture Gigantamax *Toxtricity*. 

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Sarah Tottle

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LET'S TAKE IT FROM THE TOP

There’s no shame in returning to those new year’s resolutions.

How did those new year’s resolutions work out for you? Old habits will have already returned for many – you’re not alone if you’ve already stopped using that new gym membership. Similarly, you’re in good company if 2020 is already stressing you out.

Stress, and more chronic exhaustion such as burnout, are commonplace within the modern workplace. People are sinking under the pressure of an attendance culture that glorifies being present at work at the expense of their health. But why exactly does this happen and what can you do to prevent it?

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Will it come to Netflix? HBO? Disney+? Here’s what we know.

*Ford v Ferrari* made an unexpected splash at the 2020 Oscars, proving that the Academy Awards is at its heart a celebration of dad movies. But that’s not to say that *Ford v Ferrari* isn’t a great movie. (It is!) And after its recent success, you’re probably wondering when you can stream *Ford v Ferrari* on Netflix, Hulu, or whatever your favorite streaming service may be. Disney+ anyone?

Here’s when you can expect *Ford vs. Ferrari* to get a streaming release date and where that might be.