



Living the life of Rat luxury

Back in the 1970s a neuroscientist by the name of Bill Greenough did some experiments with rats and their living accommodation. One poor group of rats drew the short straw and ended up living alone with nothing to do. The other group were bestowed comparatively plush surroundings. They had exercise wheels, ladders to climb, and other rats to talk to. Greenough called it "the rat equivalent of Disneyland". These lucky rats soon became noticeably more physically and socially active, as far as lab rats can.

Things became really interesting when their brains were later examined. The "enriched" environment rats had 25% more synapses (connections between a neuron and another cell) per neuron than their poor relatives. These additional synapses meant the rats were cleverer and quicker to find their ways through mazes and were able to learn landmarks faster.

Creating your life where you have new things to do that stimulate you is fairly easy, it just takes some forward thinking and advanced decisions. Consider ahead of time which 12 new things you could trial over a period of 6 months, perhaps doing one for 2 weeks before deciding whether to continue. Some things could be one off treats, like getting a massage. Others could be ongoing fun things like learning to dance.

Month	First new thing	Second new thing
One		
Two		
Three		
Four		
Five		
Six		