

# Why make New Year resolutions if genes and environment decide our behaviour rather than free will?

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## *Irish Times:*

THE NEW YEAR is a time for resolutions. You promise to take up jogging, spend more time with friends, do good works or maybe smile a little more frequently. But are you fundamentally deluding yourself into thinking you can change?

A growing body of research suggests that much of our behaviour is determined by either our genes or our environment, leaving little room for personal choice. The age-old notion of “free will” is under attack, boosted by examinations of brain activity during decision-making.

An influential 2007 study, which monitored people’s brains using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), suggested people became conscious of making a decision only after the relevant neurons had fired into action. Neuroscientist John-Dylan Haynes, who asked participants to hit a button with their left or right hand, was able to predict their decisions seven seconds before they were even aware of making them.

Read the whole story: [Irish Times](#)

See Roy Baumeister at the 24<sup>th</sup> APS Annual Convention: [Society for the Teaching of Psychology Talk](#) and [Invited Symposium](#)