

Are human brains the evolved pinnacle of problem-solving evolution? The reality may be more mundane

People often assume that evolution has progressed in an [upward](#) trajectory, from simple organisms to more complex ones. Because humans have such sizable brains (more specifically, our intelligence relates to the [brain-to-body mass and cerebral cortex ratios](#)), one might assume that we're the most evolved. We have defined our animal kingdom superiority in terms of our smarts and our ability to think rationally. If we [are supposedly](#) at the pinnacle of evolution, then our brains must have evolved for thinking, right?

In reality, the content between our two ears may have transformed for far more rudimentary reasons.

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[Neuroscientist and psychologist Lisa Feldman] Barrett describes how ancient evolutionary pressures, like adapting to predator-prey relationships, propelled creatures to evolve bigger, more sophisticated [bodies](#). With larger machinery, and more complex internal systems, body budgeting became a much more elaborate task.

Creatures needed to process an increasing number of variables, such as managing developing circulatory and immune systems, when assessing whether a withdrawal from their body budget would be worth it. In turn, they needed something that could process these variables. They needed a big brain.

Yes, that's right. Brains didn't evolve to help us ponder life's philosophical questions. Instead, they emerged as the control center for body budgeting.

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